

The background of the entire image is a dense, repeating geometric pattern in red ink on a light-colored surface. The pattern consists of interlocking, stylized shapes that form a continuous, tessellated design across the entire area.

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Huc, Evariste Regis,
1813-1860.
Travels in Tartary

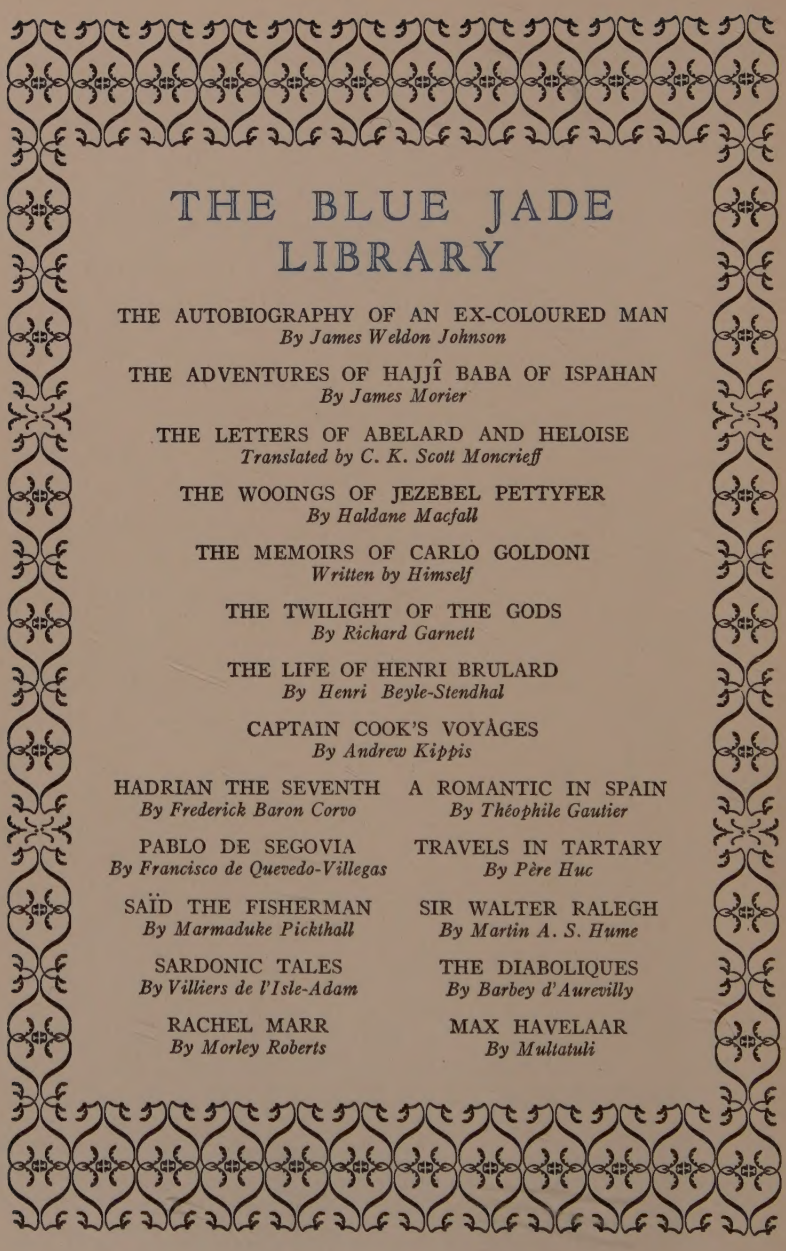
In 1844, Fathers Gabet and Huc were delegated by the Pope to explore the new Apostolic diocese of Mongolia. They made their way through countries practically unknown to the western world, hitherto considered wholly inaccessible. They met with incredible difficulties which nothing but religious enthusiasm coupled with a true adventurous spirit could have enabled them to overcome. Père Huc's account of the two years' journey, *TRAVELS IN TARTARY, THIBET, AND CHINA*, found instant recognition in France, England, and America as much for its entertainment as for the accurate and important information it contained. It immediately became one of the classics of Asiatic exploration and travel and was a famous best seller of the day. The present edition is edited from the first volume of the original and illustrated with woodcuts from it.

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TRAVELS IN
TARTARY





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TRAVELS IN TARTARY

ÉVARISTE-RÉGIS HUC

(PÈRE HUC) 1830-1860

Edited by

Jean H. D'ARDENNE DE TIZAC, 1877-

Translated from the French by

W. HAZLITT



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ORIGINAL TITLE

*Souvenirs d'un voyage dans
la Tartarie, le Thibet et la
Chine*, of which this first
volume is called:

DANS LA TARTARIE

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

ÉVARISTE-RÉGIS HUC was born August 1st, 1813, at Toulouse. At the age of twenty-four he entered the Lazarist Order, and in 1839, soon after his ordination, he went out to China. There he spent several years at various missions, studying Chinese and making numerous translations. In 1844 he and another missionary, Père Gabet, were sent to explore the newly-created apostolic vicariat of Mongolia, and for the following two years they wandered through Tartary, Thibet, and China, making their way as far as the Forbidden City of Lhasa, where they lived for some time. Huc returned to Europe in 1852 and died at Paris, March 31st, 1860.

His account of his journey, the famous *Souvenirs d'un voyage dans la Tartarie, le Thibet, et la Chine pendant les années 1844-1846*, was published at Paris in two volumes in 1850. The English translation, by W. Hazlitt, son of the great critic William Hazlitt, was brought out the following year. In 1925 H. d'Ardenne de Tizac, Curator of the Cernuschi Museum, prepared a new edition for modern readers in which much that is no longer of great interest or importance is omitted. He has thus far edited only the first volume, and the present edition of the Hazlitt translation has been prepared in conformity with his version. The illustrations are taken from the woodcuts of the first English edition.

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TRAVELS IN TARTARY



CHAPTER I

TOWARDS the commencement of the year 1844, couriers arrived at Si-wang, a small Christian community, where the vicar apostolic of Mongolia had fixed his episcopal residence. Si-wang itself is a village, north of the Great Wall, one day's journey from Suen-hoa-Fou. The prelate sent us instructions for an extended voyage we were to undertake for the purpose of studying the character and manners of the Tartars, and of ascertaining as nearly as possible the extent and limits of the vicariate. This journey, then, which we had so long meditated, was now determined upon; and we sent a young lama convert in search of some camels which we had put to pasture in the kingdom of Naiman. Pending his absence, we hastened the completion of several Mongol works, the translation of which had occupied us for a considerable time.

During this interval of painful suspense we continued to inhabit the Contiguous Defiles, a Tartar district dependent on the kingdom of Ouniot.¹ These regions appear to have been affected by great revolutions. The present inhabitants state that in the olden time the country was occupied by Korean tribes, who, expelled thence in the course of various wars, took refuge in the peninsula which they still possess, between the Yellow Sea and the sea of Japan. You often in these parts of Tartary meet with the remains of great towns and the ruins of fortresses, very nearly resembling those of the Middle Ages in Europe, and, upon turning up the soil in these

¹ Notwithstanding the slight importance of the Tartar tribes, we shall give them the name of kingdoms, because the chiefs of these tribes are called *Wang* (King).

places, it is not unusual to find lances, arrows, portions of farming implements, and urns filled with Korean money.

Towards the middle of the seventeenth century the Chinese began to penetrate into this district. At that period the whole landscape was still one of rude grandeur; the mountains were covered with fine forests, and the Mongol tents whitened the valleys, amid rich pasturages. For a very moderate sum the Chinese obtained permission to cultivate the desert, and as cultivation advanced, the Mongols were obliged to retreat, conducting their flocks and herds elsewhere. From that time forth the aspect of the country became entirely changed. All the trees were grubbed up, the forests disappeared from the hills, the prairies were cleared by means of fire, and the new cultivators set busily to work in exhausting the fecundity of the soil.

Almost the entire region is now in the hands of the Chinese, and it is probably to their system of devastation that we must attribute the extreme irregularity of the seasons which now desolate this unhappy land. Droughts are of almost annual occurrence; the spring winds setting in, dry up the soil; the heavens assume a sinister aspect, and the unfortunate population await, in utter terror, the manifestation of some terrible calamity; the winds by degrees redouble their violence, and sometimes continue to blow far into the summer months. Then the dust rises in clouds, the atmosphere becomes thick and dark; and often at midday you are environed with the terrors of night, or, rather, with an intense and almost palpable blackness, a thousand times more fearful than the most sombre night. Next after these hurricanes comes the rain: but so comes that, instead of being an object of desire, it is an object of dread, for it pours down in furious raging torrents. Sometimes the heavens, suddenly opening, pour forth in, as it were, an immense cascade all the water with which they are charged in that quarter; and

immediately the fields and their crops disappear under a sea of mud, whose enormous waves follow the course of the valleys and carry everything before them. The torrent rushes on, and in a few hours the earth reappears; but the crops are gone, and, worse even than that, the arable soil also has gone with them. Nothing remains but a ramification of deep ruts, filled with gravel, and thenceforth incapable of being ploughed.

Hail is of frequent occurrence in these unhappy districts, and the dimensions of the hail-stones are generally enormous. We have ourselves seen some that weighed twelve pounds. One moment sometimes suffices to exterminate whole flocks. In 1843, during one of these storms, there was heard in the air a sound as of a rushing wind, and therewith fell, in a field near a house, a mass of ice larger than an ordinary millstone. It was broken to pieces with hatchets, yet, though the sun burned fiercely, three days elapsed before these pieces entirely melted.

The droughts and the inundations together sometimes occasion famines which wellnigh exterminate the inhabitants. That of 1832, in the twelfth year of the reign of Tao-Kouang,² is the most terrible of these on record. The Chinese report that it was everywhere announced by a general presentiment, the exact nature of which no one could explain or comprehend. During the winter of 1831 a dark rumour grew into circulation. "Next year," it was said, "there will be neither rich nor poor; blood will cover the mountains; bones will fill the valleys (*Ou fou, ou kioung; hue man chan, kou man tchouan*)." These words were in everyone's mouth; the children repeated them in their sports; all were under the domination of these sinister apprehensions when the year 1832 commenced. Spring and summer passed away without

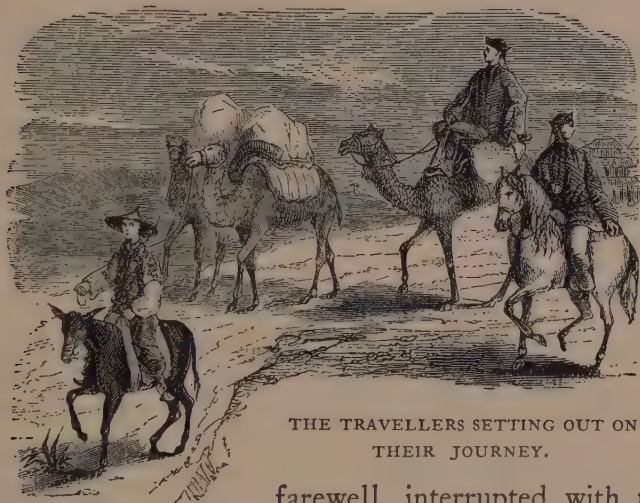
² Sixth Emperor of the Tartar-Manchu dynasty. He died in the year 1849.

rain, and the frosts of autumn set in while the crops were yet green; these crops of course perished, and there was absolutely no harvest. The population was soon reduced to the most entire destitution. Houses, fields, cattle, everything was exchanged for grain, the price of which attained its weight in gold. When the grass on the mountain sides was devoured by the starving creatures, the depths of the earth were dug into for roots. The fearful prognostic, which had been so often repeated, became accomplished. Thousands died upon the hills, whither they had crawled in search of grass; dead bodies filled the roads and houses; whole villages were depopulated to the last man. There was, indeed, neither rich nor poor; pitiless famine had levelled all alike.

All Monday was occupied in the equipment of our caravan. Every person gave his assistance to this object. Some repaired our travelling-house — that is to say, mended or patched a great blue linen tent; others cut for us a supply of wooden tent-pins; others mended the holes in our copper kettle and renovated the broken leg of a joint-stool; others prepared cords and put together the thousand and one pieces of a camel's pack. Tailors, carpenters, braziers, rope-makers, saddle-makers, people of all trades, assembled in active co-operation in the courtyard of our humble abode. For all, great and small, among our Christians were resolved that their spiritual fathers should proceed on their journey as comfortably as possible.

On Tuesday morning there remained nothing to be done but to perforate the nostrils of the camels and to insert in the aperture a wooden peg, to use as a sort of bit. The arrangement of this was left to our lama. The wild piercing cries of the poor animals pending the painful operation soon collected together all the Christians of the village. At this moment our lama became exclusively the hero of the expedition. The crowd ranged themselves in a circle around

him; everyone was curious to see how, by gently pulling the cord attached to the peg in its nose, our lama could make the animal obey him, and kneel at his pleasure. Then, again, it was an interesting thing for the Chinese to watch our lama packing on the camels' backs the baggage of the two missionary travellers. When the arrangements were completed, we drank a cup of tea and proceeded to the chapel; the Christians recited prayers for our safe journey; we received their



THE TRAVELLERS SETTING OUT ON
THEIR JOURNEY.

farewell, interrupted with tears, and proceeded on our way. Samdadchiemba, our lama camel-her, gravely mounted on a black, stunted, meagre mule, opened the march, leading two camels laden with our baggage; then came the two missionaries, MM. Gabet and Huc, the former mounted on a tall camel, the latter on a white horse.

Upon our departure we were resolved to lay aside our accustomed usages and to become regular Tartars. Yet we did not at the outset and all at once become exempt from the Chinese system. Besides that, for the first mile or two of our journey, we were escorted by our Chinese Christians, some

on foot and some on horseback, our first stage was to be an inn kept by the Grand Catechist of the Contiguous Defiles.

A Tartar-Chinese Inn. The Missionaries Become Lamas.

We were received by the landlord, or, as the Chinese call him, the Comptroller of the Chest. Inns of this description occur at intervals in the deserts of Tartary, along the confines of China. They consist almost universally of a large square enclosure, formed by high poles interlaced with brushwood. In the centre of this enclosure is a mud house, never more than ten feet high. With the exception of a few wretched rooms at each extremity, the entire structure consists of one large apartment, serving at once for cooking, eating, and sleeping; thoroughly dirty, and full of smoke and intolerable stench. Into this pleasant place all travellers, without distinction, are ushered, the portion of space applied to their accommodation being a long, wide *kang*, as it is called, a sort of furnace, occupying more than three fourths of the apartment, about four feet high, and the flat, smooth surface of which is covered with a reed mat, which the richer guests cover again with a travelling-carpet of felt or with furs. In front of it three immense coppers, set in glazed earth, serve for the preparation of the traveller's milk-broth. The apertures by which these monster boilers are heated communicate with the interior of the *kang*, so that its temperature is constantly maintained at a high elevation, even in the terrible cold of winter. Upon the arrival of guests the Comptroller of the Chest invites them to ascend the *kang*, where they seat themselves, their legs crossed tailor-fashion, round a large table, not more than six inches high. The lower part of the room is reserved for the people of the inn, who there busy themselves in keeping up the fire under the cauldrons, boiling tea, and pounding oats and buckwheat into flour for the repast of the travellers. The *kang* of these Tartar-Chinese



KANG OF A TARTAR-CHINESE INN.

inns is, till evening, a stage full of animation, where the guests eat, drink, smoke, gamble, dispute, and fight; with nightfall, the refectory, tavern, and gambling-house of the day is suddenly converted into a dormitory. The travellers who have any bed-clothes unroll and arrange them; those who have none settle themselves as best they may in their personal attire and lie down, side by side, round the table. When the guests are very numerous, they arrange themselves in two circles, feet to feet. Thus reclined, those so disposed sleep; others, awaiting sleep, smoke, drink tea, and gossip. The effect of the scene, dimly exhibited by an imperfect wick floating amid thick, dirty, stinking oil, whose receptacle is ordinarily a broken tea-cup, is fantastic and, to the stranger, fearful.

The Comptroller of the Chest had prepared his own room for our accommodation. We washed, but would not

sleep there; being now Tartar travellers and in possession of a good tent, we determined to try our apprentice hand at setting it up. This resolution offended no one; it was quite understood we adopted this course, not out of contempt towards the inn, but out of love for a patriarchal life. When we had set up our tent, and unrolled on the ground our goat-skin beds, we lighted a pile of brushwood, for the nights were already growing cold. Just as we were closing our eyes, the Inspector of Darkness startled us with beating the official night alarum, upon his brazen tamtam, the sonorous sound of which, reverberating through the adjacent valleys, struck with terror the tigers and wolves frequenting them and drove them off.

We were on foot before daylight. Previous to our departure we had to perform an operation of considerable importance — no other than an entire change of costume, a complete metamorphosis. The missionaries who reside in China all, without exception, wear the secular dress of the people and are in no way distinguishable from them; they bear no outward sign of their religious character. It is a great pity that they should be thus obliged to wear the secular costume, for it is an obstacle in the way of their preaching the gospel. Among the Tartars a “black man” — so they discriminate the laity, as wearing their hair, from the clergy, who have their heads close shaved — who should talk about religion would be laughed at, as impertinently meddling with things the special province of the lamas and in no way concerning him. The reasons which appear to have introduced and maintained the custom of wearing the secular habit on the part of the missionaries in China no longer applying to us, we resolved at length to appear in an ecclesiastical exterior becoming our sacred mission. The views of our vicar apostolic on the subject, as explained in his written instructions, being conformable with our wish, we did not hesitate. We re-

solved to adopt the secular dress of the Thibetian lamas; that is to say, the dress which they wear when not actually performing their idolatrous ministry in the pagodas. The costume of the Thibetian lamas suggested itself to our preference as being in unison with that worn by our young neophyte, Samdadchiemba.

We announced to the Christians of the inn that we were resolved no longer to look like Chinese merchants; that we were about to cut off our long tails and to shave our heads. This intimation created great agitation: some of our disciples even wept; all sought by their eloquence to divert us from a resolution which seemed to them fraught with danger; but their pathetic remonstrances were of no avail; one touch of a razor, in the hands of Samdadchiemba, sufficed to sever the long tail of hair which, to accommodate Chinese fashions, we had so carefully cultivated ever since our departure from France. We put on a long, yellow robe, fastened at the right side with five gilt buttons, and round the waist by a long, red sash; over this was a red jacket, with a collar of purple velvet; a yellow cap, surmounted by a red tuft, completed our new costume.



THE MISSIONARIES IN THEIR
LAMANESQUE COSTUMES.

Breakfast followed this decisive operation, but it was silent and sad. When the Comptroller of the Chest brought in some glasses and an urn, wherein smoked the hot wine

drunk by the Chinese, we told him that having changed our habit of dress, we should change also our habit of living. "Take away," said we, "that wine and that chafing-dish; henceforth we renounce drinking and smoking. You know," added we, laughing, "that good lamas abstain from wine and tobacco." The Chinese Christians who surrounded us did not join in the laugh; they looked at us without speaking and with deep commiseration, fully persuaded that we should inevitably perish of privation and misery in the deserts of Tartary. Breakfast finished, while the people of the inn were packing up our tent, saddling the camels, and preparing for our departure, we took a couple of rolls, baked in the steam of the furnace, and walked out to complete our meal with some wild currants growing on the bank of the adjacent rivulet. It was soon announced to us that everything was ready — so, mounting our respective animals, we proceeded on the road to Tolon-Noor, accompanied by Samdadchiemba.

Samdadchiemba.

As we have just observed, Samdadchiemba was our only travelling-companion. This young man was neither Chinese, nor Tartar, nor Thibetian. Yet, at the first glance, it was easy to recognize in him the features characterizing that which naturalists call the Mongol race. A great flat nose, insolently turned up; a large mouth, slit in a perfectly straight line; thick, projecting lips; a deep bronze complexion — every feature contributed to give to his physiognomy a wild and scornful aspect. When his little eyes seemed starting out of his head from under their lids, wholly destitute of eyelash, and he looked at you wrinkling his brow, he inspired you at once with feelings of dread and yet of confidence. The face was without any decisive character: it exhibited neither the mischievous knavery of the Chinese, nor the frank good nature of the Tartar, nor the courageous

energy of the Thibetian; but was made up of a mixture of all three. Samdadchiemba was a Dchiahour. We shall hereafter have occasion to speak more in detail of the native country of our young cameleer.

At the age of eleven Samdadchiemba had escaped from his lamasery, in order to avoid the too frequent and too severe corrections of the master under whom he was more immediately placed. He afterwards passed the greater portion of his vagabond youth, sometimes in the Chinese towns, sometimes in the deserts of Tartary. It is easy to comprehend that this independent course of life had not tended to modify the natural asperity of his character; his intellect was entirely uncultivated; but, on the other hand, his muscular power was enormous, and he was not a little vain of this quality, which he took great pleasure in parading. After having been instructed and baptized by M. Gabet, he had attached himself to the service of the missionaries. The journey we were now undertaking was perfectly in harmony with his erratic and adventurous taste. He was, however, of no mortal service to us as a guide across the deserts of Tartary, for he knew no more of the country than we knew ourselves. Our only informants were a compass, and the excellent map of the Chinese Empire by Andriveau-Goujon.



SAMDADCHIEMBA.

The "Good Mountain." Exquisite Courtesy of Bandits.

The first portion of our journey, after leaving Yan-Pa-Eul, was accomplished without interruption, sundry anathemas excepted, which were hurled against us as we ascended

a mountain, by a party of Chinese merchants, whose mules, upon sight of our camels and our own yellow attire, became frightened, and took to their heels at full speed, dragging after them, and in one or two instances overturning, the wagons to which they were harnessed.

The mountain in question is called Sain-Oula (Good Mountain), doubtless *ut lucus a non lucendo*, since it is notorious for the dismal accidents and tragical adventures of which it is the theatre. The ascent is by a rough, steep path, half choked up with fallen rocks. Midway up is a small temple, dedicated to the divinity of the mountain, Sain-Nai (the good old woman); the occupant is a priest, whose business it is from time to time to fill up the cavities in the road occasioned by the previous rains, in consideration of which service he receives from each passenger a small gratuity, constituting his revenue. After a toilsome journey of nearly three hours we found ourselves at the summit of the mountain, upon an immense plateau, extending from east to west a long day's journey, and from north to south still more widely. From this summit you discern, afar off in the plains of Tartary, the tents of the Mongols, ranged semi-circularly on the slopes of the hills, and looking in the distance like so many beehives. Several rivers derive their source from the sides of this mountain. Chief among these is the Chara-Mouren (Yellow River — distinct, of course, from the great Yellow River of China, the Hoang-Ho) — the capricious course of which the eye can follow on through the kingdom of Gechekten, after traversing which, and then the district of Naiman, it passes the stake boundary into Manchuria and, flowing from north to south, falls into the sea, approaching which it assumes the name Léao-Ho.

The Good Mountain is noted for its intense frosts. There is not a winter passes in which the cold there does not kill many travellers. Frequently whole caravans, not ar-

living at their destination on the other side of the mountain, are sought and found on its bleak road, man and beast frozen to death. Nor is the danger less from the robbers and the wild beasts with whom the mountain is a favourite haunt, or, rather, a permanent station. Assailed by the brigands, the unlucky traveller is stripped, not merely of horse and money and baggage, but absolutely of the clothes he wears, and then left to perish from cold and hunger.

Not but that the brigands of these parts are extremely polite all the while; they do not rudely clap a pistol to your ear and bawl at you: "Your money or your life!" No; they mildly advance with a courteous salutation: "Venerable elder brother, I am on foot; pray lend me your horse — I've got no money, be good enough to lend me your purse — it's quite cold today, oblige me with the loan of your coat." If the venerable elder brother charitably complies, the matter ends with "Thanks, brother"; but otherwise the request is forthwith emphasized with the arguments of a cudgel; and if these do not convince, recourse is had to the sabre.

Detestable First Meal of the Nomad Life.

The sun declining ere we had traversed this platform, we resolved to encamp for the night. Our first business was to seek a position combining the three essentials of fuel, water, and pasturage; and, having due regard to the ill reputation of the Good Mountain, privacy from observation as complete as could be effected. Being novices in travelling, the idea of robbers haunted us incessantly, and we took everybody we saw to be a suspicious character, against whom we must be on our guard. A grassy nook, surrounded by tall trees, appertaining to the Imperial Forest, fulfilled our requisites. Unlading our dromedaries, we raised, with no slight labour, our tent beneath the foliage, and at its entrance installed our faithful porter, Arsalan, a dog whose size, strength, and courage well

entitled him to his appellation, which, in the Tartar-Mongol dialect, means "Lion." Collecting some *argols*³ and dry branches of trees, our kettle was soon in agitation, and we threw into the boiling water some *Kouamien*, prepared paste, something like vermicelli, which, seasoned with some parings of bacon, given us by our friends at Yan-Pa-Eul, we hoped would furnish satisfaction for the hunger that began to gnaw us. No sooner was the repast ready than each of us, drawing forth from his girdle his wooden cup, filled it with *Kouamien* and raised it to his lips. The preparation was detestable — uneatable. The manufacturers of *Kouamien* always salt it for its longer preservation; but this paste of ours had been salted beyond all endurance. Even Arsalan would not eat the composition. Soaking it for a while in cold water, we once more boiled it up, but in vain; the dish remained nearly as salt as ever: so, abandoning it to Samdadchiemba, whose stomach by long use was capable of anything, we were fain to content ourselves with the "dry-cold," as the Chinese say; and, taking with us a couple of small loaves, walked into the Imperial Forest, in order at least to season our repast with an agreeable walk. Our first nomad supper, however, turned out better than we had expected, Providence placing in our path numerous *Ngao-la-Eul* and *Chan-ly-Houng* trees, the former a shrub about five inches high, which bears a pleasant wild cherry; the other also a low but very bushy shrub, producing a small scarlet apple, of a sharp agreeable flavour, of which a very succulent jelly is made.

The Imperial Forest. The Great Obo.

The Imperial Forest extends more than a hundred leagues from north to south and nearly eighty from east to west. The Emperor Khan-Hi, in one of his expeditions into

³ Dried dung, which constitutes the chief, and indeed in many places the sole fuel in Tartary.

Mongolia, adopted it as a hunting-ground. He repaired thither every year, and his successors regularly followed his example, down to Kia-King, who, upon a hunting excursion, was killed by lightning at Ge-ho-Eul. There has been no imperial hunting there since that time — now twenty-seven years ago. Tao-Kouang, son and successor of Kia-King, being persuaded that a fatality impends over the exercise of the chase, since his accession to the throne has never set foot in Ge-ho-Eul, which may be regarded as the Versailles of the Chinese potentates. The forest, however, and the animals which inhabit it, have been no gainers by the circumstance. Despite the penalty of perpetual exile decreed against all who shall be found with arms in their hands in the forest, it is always half full of poachers and wood-cutters. Gamekeepers, indeed, are stationed at intervals throughout the forest; but they seem there merely for the purpose of enjoying a monopoly of the sale of game and wood. They let anyone steal either, provided they themselves get the larger share of the booty. The poachers are in especial force from the fourth to the seventh moon. At this period the antlers of the stags send forth new shoots, which contain a sort of half-coagulated blood, called *Lou-joung*, which plays a distinguished part in the Chinese *materia medica*, for its supposed chemical qualities, and fetches accordingly an exorbitant price. A *Lou-joung* sometimes sells for as much as a hundred and fifty ounces of silver.

Deer of all kinds abound in the forest; and tigers, bears, wild-boars, panthers, and wolves are scarcely less numerous. Woe to the hunters and wood-cutters who venture otherwise than in large parties into the recesses of the forest; they disappear, leaving no vestige behind.

The fear of encountering one of these wild beasts kept us from prolonging our walk. Besides, night was setting in, and we hastened back to our tent. Our first slumber in

the desert was peaceful, and next morning early, after a breakfast of oatmeal steeped in tea, we resumed our march along the great plateau. We soon reached the great *obo*, whither the Tartars resort to worship the Spirit of the Mountain. The monument is simply an enormous pile of stones, heaped up without any order and surmounted with dried branches of trees, from which hang bones and strips of cloth, on which are inscribed verses in the Thibet and Mongol languages. At its base is a large granite urn in which the devotees burn incense. They offer, besides, pieces of money, which the next Chinese passenger, after sundry ceremonious genuflexions before the *obo*, carefully collects and pockets for his own particular benefit.

These *obos*, which occur so frequently throughout Tartary, and which are the objects of constant pilgrimages on the part of the Mongols, remind one of the *loca excelsa* denounced by the Jewish prophets.

The Kingdom of Gechekten. How the Mongols are Ruined by the Chinese.

It was near noon before the ground, beginning to slope, intimated that we approached the termination of the plateau. We then descended rapidly into a deep valley, where we found a small Mongolian encampment, which we passed without pausing, and set up our tent for the night on the margin of a pool farther on. We were now in the kingdom of Gechekten, an undulating country, well watered, with abundance of fuel and pasturage, but desolated by bands of robbers. The Chinese, who have long since taken possession of it, have rendered it a sort of general refuge for malefactors; so that "man of Gechekten" has become a synonym for a person without fear of God or man, who will commit any murder and shrink from no crime. It would seem as though, in this country, nature resented the encroachments

of man upon her rights. Wherever the plough has passed, the soil has become poor, arid, and sandy, producing nothing but oats, which constitute the food of the people. In the whole district there is but one trading town, which the Mongols call Altan-Somé (Temple of Gold). This was at first a great lamasery, containing nearly two thousand lamas. By degrees Chinese have settled there, in order to traffic with the Tartars. In 1843, when we had occasion to visit this place, it had already acquired the importance of a town. A highway, commencing at Altan-Somé, proceeds towards the north and, after traversing the country of the Khalkhas, the river Keroulan, and the Khinggan mountains, reaches Nerchinsk, a town of Siberia.

The sun had just set, and we were occupied inside the tent boiling our tea, when Arsalan warned us, by his barking, of the approach of some stranger. We soon heard the trot of a horse, and presently a mounted Tartar appeared at the door. "*Mendou*," he exclaimed, by way of respectful salutation to the supposed lamas, raising his joined hands at the same time to his forehead. When we invited him to drink a cup of tea with us, he fastened his horse to one of the tent-pegs and seated himself by the hearth. "Sirs Lamas," said he, "under what quarter of the heavens were you born?" "We are from the western heaven; and you, whence come you?" "My poor abode is towards the north, at the end of the valley you see there on our right." "Your country is a fine country." The Mongol shook his head sadly and made no reply. "Brother," we proceeded, after a moment's silence, "the Land of Grass is still very extensive in the kingdom of Gechekten. Would it not be better to cultivate your plains? What good are these bare lands to you? Would not fine crops of corn be preferable to mere grass?" He replied, with a tone of deep and settled conviction: "We Mongols are formed for living in tents and pasturing cattle. So long as

we kept to that in the kingdom of Gechekten, we were rich and happy. Now, ever since the Mongols have set themselves to cultivating the land and building houses, they have become poor. The Kitat (Chinese) have taken possession of the country; flocks, herds, lands, houses, all have passed into their hands. There remain to us only a few prairies, on which still live, under their tents, such of the Mongols as have not been forced by utter destitution to emigrate to other lands." "But if the Chinese are so baneful to you, why did you let them penetrate into your country?" "Your words are the words of truth, Sirs Lamas; but you are aware that the Mongols are men of simple hearts. We took pity on these wicked Kitats, who came to us weeping, to solicit our charity. We allowed them, through pure compassion, to cultivate a few patches of land. The Mongols insensibly followed their example, and abandoned the nomadic life. They drank the wine of the Kitats and smoked their tobacco, on credit; they bought their manufactures on credit at double the real value. When the day of payment came, there was no money ready, and the Mongols had to yield, to the violence of their creditors, houses, lands, flocks, everything." "But could you not seek justice from the tribunals?" "Justice from the tribunals! Oh, that is out the question. The Kitats are skilful to talk and to lie. It is impossible for a Mongol to gain a suit against a Kitat. Sirs Lamas, the kingdom of Gechekten is undone!" So saying, the poor Mongol rose, bowed, mounted his horse, and rapidly disappeared in the desert.

Tragic Exploitation of a Gold Mine.

We travelled two more days through this kingdom and everywhere witnessed the poverty and wretchedness of its scattered inhabitants. Yet the country is naturally endowed with astonishing wealth, especially in gold and silver mines, which of themselves have occasioned many of its worst ca-

lamities. Notwithstanding the rigorous prohibition to work these mines, it sometimes happens that large bands of Chinese outlaws assemble together and march, sword in hand, to dig into them. These are men professing to be endowed with a peculiar capacity for discovering the precious metals, guided, according to their own account, by the conformation of mountains, and the sorts of plants they produce. One single man, possessed of this fatal gift, will suffice to spread desolation over a whole district. He speedily finds himself at the head of thousands and thousands of outcasts, who overspread the country and render it the theatre of every crime. While some are occupied in working the mines, others pillage the surrounding districts, sparing neither persons nor property and committing excesses which the imagination could not conceive and which continue until some mandarin, powerful and courageous enough to suppress them, is brought within their operation and takes measures against them accordingly.

Calamities of this nature have frequently desolated the kingdom of Géchekten; but none of them are comparable with what happened in the kingdom of Ouniot, in 1841. A Chinese mine-discoverer, having ascertained the presence of gold in a particular mountain, announced the discovery, and robbers and vagabonds at once congregated around him, from far and near, to the number of twelve thousand. This hideous mob put the whole country under subjection and exercised for two years its fearful sway. Almost the entire mountain passed through the crucible, and such enormous quantities of metal were produced that the price of gold fell in China fifty per cent. The inhabitants complained incessantly to the Chinese mandarins, but in vain, for these worthies interfere only where they can do so with some benefit to themselves. The King of Ouniot himself feared to measure his strength with such an army of desperadoes.

One day, however, the Queen of Ouniot, repairing on

a pilgrimage to the tomb of her ancestors, had to pass the valley in which the army of miners was assembled. Her car was surrounded, she was rudely compelled to alight, and it was only upon the sacrifice of her jewels that she was permitted to proceed. Upon her return home she reproached



MILITARY MANDARIN.

the King bitterly for his cowardice. At length, stung by her words, he assembled the troops of his two banners and marched against the miners. The engagement which ensued was for a while doubtful, but at length the miners were driven in by the Tartar cavalry, who massacred them without mercy. The bulk of the survivors took refuge in the mine. The Mongols blocked up the apertures with huge

stones. The cries of the despairing wretches within were heard for a few days and then ceased for ever. Those of the miners who were taken alive had their eyes put out and were then dismissed.

Stolen Horses. Samdadchiemba, Caster of Horoscopes.

We had just quitted the kingdom of Gechekten and entered that of Thakar, when we came to a military encampment, where were stationed a party of Chinese soldiers charged with the preservation of the public safety. The hour of repose had arrived; but these soldiers, instead of giving us confidence by their presence, increased, on the contrary, our fears; for we knew that they were themselves the most daring robbers in the whole district. We turned aside, therefore, and ensconced ourselves between two rocks, where we found just space enough for our tent. We had scarcely set up our temporary abode when we observed, in the distance, on the slope of the mountains, a numerous body of horsemen at full gallop. Their rapid but irregular evolutions seemed to indicate that they were pursuing something which constantly evaded them. By and by, two of the horsemen, perceiving us, dashed up to our tent, dismounted, and threw themselves on the ground at the door. They were Tartar-Mongols. "Men of prayer," said they, with voices full of emotion, "we come to ask you to draw our horoscope. We have this day had two horses stolen from us. We have fruitlessly sought traces of the robbers, and we therefore come to you, men whose power and learning is beyond all limit, to tell us where we shall find our property." "Brothers," said we, "we are not lamas of Buddha; we do not believe in horoscopes. For a man to say that he can, by any such means, discover that which is stolen, is for him to put forth the words of falsehood and deception." The poor Tartars redoubled their solicitations; but when they found that we were inflexible in our resolution,

they remounted their horses, in order to return to the mountains.

Samdadchiemba, meanwhile, had been silent, apparently paying no attention to the incident, but fixed at the fireplace, with his bowl of tea to his lips. All of a sudden he knitted his brows, rose, and came to the door. The horsemen were at some distance; but the Dchiahour, by an exertion of his strong lungs, induced them to turn round in their saddles. He motioned to them, and they, supposing we had relented and were willing to draw the desired horoscope, galloped once more towards us. When they had come within speaking distance, "My Mongol brothers," cried Samdadchiemba, "in future be more careful; watch your herds well and you won't be robbed. Retain these words of mine on your memory: they are worth all the horoscopes in the world." After this friendly address he gravely re-entered the tent and, seating himself at the hearth, resumed his tea.

We were at first somewhat disconcerted by this singular proceeding; but as the horsemen themselves did not take the matter in ill part, but quietly rode off, we burst into a laugh. "Stupid Mongols!" grumbled Samdadchiemba; "they don't take the trouble to watch their animals, and then, when they are stolen from them, they run about wanting people to draw horoscopes for them. After all, perhaps, it's no wonder, for nobody but ourselves tells them the truth. The lamas encourage them in their credulity, for they turn it into a source of income. It is difficult to deal with such people. If you tell them you can't draw a horoscope, they don't believe you, and merely suppose you don't choose to oblige them. To get rid of them, the best way is to give them an answer haphazard." And here Samdadchiemba laughed with such expansion that his little eyes were completely buried. "Did you ever draw a horoscope?" asked we. "Yes," replied he, still laughing. "I was very young at the time,

not more than fifteen. I was travelling through the Red Banner of Thakar when I was addressed by some Mongols who led me into their tent. There they entreated me to tell them, by means of divination, where a bull had strayed, which had been missing three days. It was to no purpose that I protested to them I could not perform divination, that I could not even read. 'You deceive us,' said they; 'you are a Dchiahour, and we know that the western lamas can all divine more or less.' As the only way of extricating myself from the dilemma, I resolved to imitate what I had seen the lamas do in their divinations. I directed one person to collect eleven sheep's droppings, the driest he could find. They were immediately brought. I then seated myself very gravely; I counted the droppings over and over; I arranged them in rows and then counted them again; I rolled them up and down in threes, and then appeared to meditate. At last I said to the Mongols, who were impatiently awaiting the result of the horoscope: 'If you would find your bull, go seek him towards the north.' Before the words were well out of my mouth, four men were on horseback, galloping off towards the north. By the most curious chance in the world, they had not proceeded far before the missing animal made its appearance, quietly browsing. I at once got the character of a diviner of the first class, was entertained in the most liberal manner for a week, and when I departed, had a stock of butter and tea given me enough for another week. Now that I belong to Holy Church, I know that these things are wicked and prohibited; otherwise I would have given these horsemen a word or two of horoscope, which perhaps would have procured for us, in return, a good cup of tea, with butter."

The stolen horses confirmed in our minds the ill reputation of the country in which we were now encamped, and we felt ourselves necessitated to take additional precaution.

Before nightfall we brought in the horse and the mule and fastened them by cords to pins at the door of our tent and made the camels kneel by their side, so as to close up the entrance. By this arrangement no one could get near us without our having full warning given us by the camels, which, at the least noise, always make an outcry loud enough to awaken the deepest sleeper. Finally, having suspended from one of the tent-poles our travelling-lantern, which we kept burning all the night, we endeavoured to obtain a little repose, but in vain; the night passed away without our getting a wink of sleep. As to the Dchiahour, whom nothing ever troubled, we heard him snoring with all the might of his lungs until day-break.

Nearing Tolon-Noor.

We made our preparations for departure very early, for we were eager to quit this ill-famed place, and to reach Tolon-Noor, which was now distant only a few leagues.

On our way thither, a horseman stopped his galloping steed and, after looking at us for a moment, addressed us: "You are the chiefs of the Christians of the Contiguous Defiles?" Upon our replying in the affirmative he dashed off again, but turned his head once or twice to have another look at us. He was a Mongol, who had charge of some herds at the Contiguous Defiles. He had often seen us there, but the novelty of our present costume at first prevented his recognizing us. We met also the Tartars who, the day before, had asked us to draw a horoscope for them. They had repaired by day-break to the horse-fair at Tolon-Noor, in the hope of finding their stolen animals; but their search had been unsuccessful.

The increasing number of travellers, Tartars and Chinese, whom we now met indicated the approach to the great town of Tolon-Noor. We already saw in the distance, glitter-

ing under the sun's rays, the gilt roofs of two magnificent lamaseries that stand in the northern suburbs of the town. We journeyed for some time through a succession of cemeteries; for here, as elsewhere, the present generation is surrounded by the ornamental sepulchres of past generations. As we observed the numerous population of that large town, environed, as it were, by a vast circle of bones and monumental stones, it seemed as though death was continuously engaged in the blockade of life. Here and there in the vast cemetery which completely encircles the city we remarked little gardens, where by dint of extreme labour a few miserable vegetables were extracted from the earth: leeks, spinach, hard, bitter lettuces, and cabbages, which, introduced some years since from Russia, have adapted themselves exceedingly well to the climate of northern China.

With the exception of these few esculents the environs of Tolon-Noor produce absolutely nothing whatever. The soil is dry and sandy, and water terribly scarce. It is only here and there that a few limited springs are found, and these are dried up in the hot season.



CHAPTER II

OUR entrance into the city of Tolon-Noor was fatiguing and full of perplexity, for we knew not where to take up our abode. We wandered about for a long time in a labyrinth of narrow, tortuous streets, encumbered with men and animals and goods. At last we found an inn. We unloaded our dromedaries, deposited the baggage in a small room, foddered the animals, and then, having affixed to the door of our room the padlock which, as is the custom, our landlord gave us for that purpose, we sallied forth in quest of dinner. A triangular flag floating before a house in the next street indicated to our joyful hearts an eating-house. A long passage led us into a spacious apartment, in which were symmetrically set forth a number of little tables. As soon as we had seated ourselves at one of these, a tea-pot, the inevitable prelude in these countries to every meal, was set before each of us. You must swallow infinite tea, and that boiling hot, before they will consent to bring you anything else. At last, when they see you thus occupied, the Comptroller of the Table pays you his official visit, a personage of immensely elegant manners and ceaseless volubility of tongue, who, after entertaining you with his views upon the affairs of the world in general and each country in particular, concludes by announcing what there is to eat and requesting your judgment thereupon. As you mention the dishes you desire, he repeats their names in a measured chant, for the information of the Governor of the Pot. Your dinner is served up with admirable promptitude; but before you commence the meal, etiquette

requires that you rise from your seat and invite all the other company present to partake. "Come," you say, with an engaging gesture, "come, my friends, come and drink a glass of wine with me; come and eat a plate of rice"; and so on. "No, thank you," replies everybody; "do you rather come and seat yourself at my table. It is I who invite you"; and so the matter ends. By this ceremony you have "manifested your honour," as the phrase runs, and you may now sit down and eat in comfort, your character as a gentleman perfectly established.

When you rise to depart, the Comptroller of the Table again appears. As you cross the apartment with him, he chants over again the names of the dishes you have had, this time appending the prices and terminating with the sum total, announced with especial emphasis, which, proceeding to the counter, you then deposit in the money-box. In general, the Chinese restaurateurs are quite as skilful as those of France in exciting the vanity of the guests and promoting the consumption of their commodities.

Tolon-Noor: Its Commerce, Its Art Foundries. Influence of Occidental Religion.

Two motives had induced us to direct our steps, in the first instance, to Tolon-Noor: we desired to make more purchases there to complete our travelling-equipment, and, secondly, it appeared to us necessary to place ourselves in communication with the lamas of the country, in order to obtain information from them as to the more important localities of Tartary. The purchases we needed to make gave us occasion to visit the different quarters of the town. Tolon-Noor (Seven Lakes) is called by the Chinese Lama-Miao (Convent of Lamas). The Manchus designate it Nadan-Omo, and the Thibetians, Tsot-Dun, both translations of Tolon-Noor, and, equally with it, meaning "Seven Lakes."

Tolon-Noor is not a walled city, but a vast agglomeration of hideous houses, which seem to have been thrown together with a pitchfork. The carriage portion of the streets is a marsh of mud and putrid filth, deep enough to stifle and bury the smaller beasts of burden that not unfrequently fall within it, and whose carcasses remain to aggravate the general stench, while their loads become the prey of the innumerable thieves who are ever on the alert. The foot-path is a narrow, rugged, slippery line on either side, just wide enough to admit the passage of one person.

Yet, despite the nastiness of the town itself, the sterility of the environs, the excessive cold of its winter, and the intolerable heat of its summer, its population is immense and its commerce enormous. Russian merchandise is brought hither in large quantities by the way of Kiakhta. The Tartars bring incessant herds of camels, oxen, and horses, and carry back in exchange tobacco, linen, and tea. This constant arrival and departure of strangers communicates to the city an animated and varied aspect. All sorts of hawkers are at every corner offering their petty wares; the regular traders, from behind their counters, invite, with honeyed words and tempting offers, the passers-by to come in and buy. The lamas, in their red and yellow robes, gallop up and down, seeking admiration for their equestrianism and the skilful management of their fiery steeds.

The trade of Tolon-Noor is mostly in the hands of men from the province of Chan-Si, who seldom establish themselves permanently in the town, but after a few years, when their money-chest is filled, return to their own country. In this vast emporium the Chinese invariably make fortunes, and the Tartars invariably are ruined. Tolon-Noor, in fact, is a sort of great pneumatic pump, constantly at work in emptying the pockets of the unlucky Mongols.

The magnificent statues, in bronze and brass, which

issue from the great foundries of Tolon-Noor are celebrated not only throughout Tartary, but in the remotest districts of Thibet. Its immense workshops supply all the countries subject to the worship of Buddha with idols, bells, and vases employed in that idolatry. While we were in the town, a monster statue of Buddha, a present from a friend of Oudchou-Mourdain to the Talè-Lama, was packed for



BELL AND IDOL 'FOUNDRY.

Thibet, on the backs of eighty-four camels. The larger statues are cast in detail, the component parts being afterwards soldered together.

We availed ourselves of our stay at Tolon-Noor to have a figure of Christ constructed on the model of a bronze original which we had brought with us from France. The workmen so marvellously excelled that it was difficult to distinguish the copy from the original. The Chinese work more rapidly and cheaply, and their complaisance contrasts

most favourably with the tenacious self-opinion of their brethren in Europe.

During our stay at Tolon-Noor we had frequent occasion to visit the lamaseries, or lama monasteries, and to converse with the idolatrous priests of Buddhism. The lamas appeared to us persons of very limited information; and as to their symbolism, in general it is little more refined or purer than the creed of the vulgar. Their doctrine is still undecided, fluctuating amidst a vast fanaticism of which they can give no intelligible account. When we asked them for some distinct, clear, positive idea what they meant, they were always thrown into utter embarrassment, and stared at one another. The disciples told us that their masters knew all about it; the masters referred us to the omniscience of the Grand Lamas; the Grand Lamas confessed themselves ignorant, but talked of some wonderful saint, in some lamasery at the other end of the country: *he* could explain the whole affair. However, all of them, disciples and masters, great lamas and small, agreed in this, that their doctrine came from the West: "The nearer you approach the West," said they unanimously, "the purer and more luminous will the doctrine manifest itself." When we expounded to them the truths of Christianity, they never discussed the matter; they contented themselves with calmly saying: "Well, we don't suppose that our prayers are the only prayers in the world. The lamas of the West will explain everything to you. We believe in the traditions that have come from the West."

In point of fact, there is no lamasery of any importance in Tartary the Grand Lama or superior of which is not a man from Thibet. Any Tartar lama who has visited Lhasa (Land of Spirits), or Monhe-Dhot (Eternal Sanctuary) as it is called in the Mongol dialect, is received on his return as a man to whom the mysteries of the past and of the future have been unveiled.

Picturesque Encampment. Culinary Progress. Tea in Bricks.

After maturely weighing the information we had obtained from the lamas, it was decided that we should direct our steps towards the west. On October 1st we quitted Tolon-Noor, and it was not without infinite trouble that we managed to traverse the filthy town with our camels. The poor animals could get through the quagmire streets only by fits and starts; it was first a stumble, then a convulsive jump, then another stumble and another jump, and so on. Their loads shook on their backs, and at every step we expected to see the camel and camel-load prostrate in the mud. We considered ourselves lucky when, at distant intervals, we came to a comparatively dry spot, where the camels could travel, and we were thus enabled to readjust and tighten the baggage. Samdadchiemba got into a desperate ill temper; he went on, and slipped, and went on again, without uttering a single word, restricting the visible manifestation of his wrath to a continuous biting of the lips.

Upon attaining at length the western extremity of the town, we got clear of the filth indeed, but found ourselves involved in another evil. Before us there was no road marked out, not the slightest trace of even a path. There was nothing but an apparently interminable chain of small hills, composed of fine, moving sand, over which it was impossible to advance at more than a snail's pace, and this only with extreme labour. Among these sand-hills, moreover, we were oppressed with an absolutely stifling heat. Our animals were covered with perspiration, ourselves devoured with a burning thirst; but it was in vain that we looked round in all directions, as we proceeded, for water; not a spring, not a pool, not a drop presented itself.

It was already late and we began to fear we should find no spot favourable for the erection of our tent. The ground,

however, grew by degrees firmer, and we at last discerned some signs of vegetation. By and by the sand almost disappeared, and our eyes were rejoiced with the sight of continuous verdure. On our left, at no great distance, we saw the opening of a defile. M. Gabet urged on his camel and went to examine the spot. He soon made his appearance at the summit of a hill and with voice and hand directed us to follow him. We hastened on and found that Providence had led us to a favourable position. A small pool, the waters of which were half concealed by thick reeds and other marshy vegetation, some brushwood, a plot of grass: what could we under the circumstances desire more? Hungry, thirsty, weary as we were, the place seemed a perfect Eden.

The camels were no sooner squatted than we all three, with one accord and without a word said, seized each man his wooden cup and rushed to the pond to satisfy his thirst. The water was fresh enough, but it affected the nose violently with its strong muriatic odour. I remembered to have drunk water just like it in the Pyrenees, at the good town of Ax, and to have seen it for sale in the chemists' shops elsewhere in France; and I remembered further that by reason of its being particularly stinking and particularly nasty it was sold there at fifteen sous per bottle.

After we had quenched our thirst, our strength by degrees returned, and we were then able to fix our tent, and each man to set about his especial task. M. Gabet proceeded to cut some bundles of hornbeam wood; Samdadchiemba collected argols in the flaps of his jacket; and M. Huc, seated at the entrance of the tent, tried his hand at drawing a fowl, a process which Arsalan, stretched at his side, watched with greedy eye, having immediate reference to the entrails in course of removal. We were resolved, for once and away, to have a little festival in the desert, and to take the opportunity

to indulge our patriotism by initiating our Dchiahour in the luxury of a dish prepared according to the rules of the *cuisinier français*. The fowl, artistically dismembered, was placed at the bottom of our great pot. A few roots of synapia, prepared in salt water, some onions, a clove of garlic, and some allspice constituted the seasoning. The preparation was soon boiling, for we were that day rich in fuel. Samdadchiemba by and by plunged his hand into the pot, drew out a limb of the fowl, and, after carefully inspecting it, pronounced supper to be ready. The pot was taken from the trivet and placed upon the grass. We all three seated ourselves around it, so that our knees almost touched it, and each, armed with two chopsticks, fished out the pieces he desired from the abundant broth before him.

When the meal was completed, and we had thanked God for the repast he had thus provided us with in the desert, Samdadchiemba went and washed the cauldron in the pond. That done, he brewed us some tea. The tea used by the Tartars is not prepared in the same way as that consumed by the Chinese. The latter, it is known, merely employ the smaller and tenderer leaves of the plant, which they simply infuse in boiling water, so as to give it a golden tint; the coarser leaves, with which are mixed up the smaller tendrils, are pressed together in a mould, in the form and of the size of the ordinary house brick. Thus prepared, it becomes an article of considerable commerce, under the designation of Tartar tea, the Tartars being its exclusive consumers, with the exception of the Russians, who drink great quantities of it. When required for use, a piece of the brick is broken off, pulverized, and boiled in the kettle until the water assumes a reddish hue. Some salt is then thrown in, and effervescence commences. When the liquid has become almost black, milk is added, and the beverage, the grand luxury of the Tartars,

is then transferred to the tea-pot. Samdadchiemba was a perfect enthusiast of this tea. For our parts, we drank it in default of something better.

Encounter with a Queen of the Khalkhas.

Next morning, after rolling up our tent, we quitted this asylum without regret indeed, for we had selected and occupied it altogether without preference. We had not advanced an hour's journey on our way when we heard behind us the trampling of many horses, and the confused sound of many voices. We looked back and saw hastening in our direction a numerous caravan. Three horsemen soon overtook us, one of whom, whose costume bespoke him a Tartar mandarin, addressed us with a loud voice: "Sirs, where is your country?" "We come from the west." "Through what districts has your beneficial shadow passed?" "We have last come from Tolon-Noor." "Has peace accompanied your progress?" "Hitherto we have journeyed in all tranquillity. And you: are you at peace? And what is your country?" "We are Khalkhas, of the kingdom of Mourguevan." "Have the rains been abundant? Are your flocks and herds flourishing?" "All goes well in our pasture-grounds." "Whither proceeds your caravan?" "We go to incline our foreheads before the Five Towers." The rest of the caravan had joined us in the course of this abrupt and hurried conversation. We were on the banks of a small stream, bordered with brushwood. The chief of the caravan ordered a halt, and the camels formed, as each came up, a circle, in the centre of which was drawn up a close carriage upon four wheels. "Sok! sok!" cried the camel-drivers, and at the word and as with one motion the entire circle of intelligent animals knelt. While numerous tents, taken from their backs, were set up, as it were, by enchantment, two mandarins, decorated with the blue button, approached the carriages, opened the door, and handed out

a Tartar lady, covered with a long, silk robe. She was the Queen of the Khalkhas, repairing in pilgrimage to the famous Lamasery of the Five Towers, in the province of Chan-Si. When she saw us, she saluted us with the ordinary form of raising both her hands. "Sirs Lamas," she said, "is this place auspicious for an encampment?" "Royal Pilgrim of Mourguevan," we replied, "you may light your fires here in all security. For ourselves, we must proceed on our way, for the sun was already high when we folded our tent." And so saying, we took our leave of the Tartars of Mourguevan.

Our minds were deeply excited upon beholding this queen and her numerous suite performing this long pilgrimage through the desert: no danger, no distance, no expense, no privation deters the Mongols from the prosecution of pilgrimages. The Mongols are, indeed, an essentially religious people; with them the future life is everything, the things of this world nothing. They live in the world as though they were not of it; they cultivate no lands, they build no houses; they regard themselves as foreigners travelling through life; and this feeling, deep and universal, develops itself in the practical form of incessant journeys.

Deluge. How One Tartar Vanquished the English.

We had left far behind us the pilgrims of Mourguevan and began to regret that we had not encamped in their company upon the banks of the pleasant stream and amid the fat pastures which it fed. Sensations of fear grew upon us as we saw great clouds arise in the horizon, spread, and gradually obscure the sky. We looked anxiously around, in all directions, for a place in which we could commodiously halt for the night, but we saw no indication whatever of water. While we were deep in this perplexity, some large drops of rain told us that we had no time to lose. "Let us

make haste and set up the tent," cried Samdadchiemba vehemently. "You need not trouble yourselves any more in looking for water; you will have water enough presently. Let us get under shelter before the sky falls on our heads." "That is all very well," said we, "but we must have some water for the animals and ourselves to drink. You alone require a bucket of water for your tea every evening. Where shall we find some water?" "My fathers, you will very speedily have more water than you like. Let us encamp, that's the first thing to be done. As to thirst, no one will need to die of that this evening: dig but a few holes about the tent, and they'll soon overflow with rain-water. But we need not even dig holes," added Samdadchiemba, extending his right hand; "do you see that shepherd there and his flock? You may be sure water is not far off." Following with our eyes the direction of his finger, we perceived in a lateral valley a man driving a large flock of sheep. We immediately turned aside and hastened after the man. The rain, which now began to fall in torrents, redoubled our celerity. To aggravate our distress, the lading of one of the camels just at this moment became loose and slipped right round towards the ground, and we had to wait while the camel knelt and Samdadchiemba readjusted the baggage on its back. We were, consequently, thoroughly wet through before we reached a small lake, now agitated and swollen by the falling torrent. There was no occasion for deliberating that evening as to the particular site on which we should set up our tent; selection was out of the question when the ground all about was deeply saturated with the rain.

The violence of the rain itself mitigated, but the wind absolutely raged. We had infinite trouble to unroll our miserable tents, heavy and impracticable with wet, like a large sheet just taken from the washing-tub. The difficulty seemed insuperable when we attempted to stretch it upon its poles, and we should never have succeeded at all but for the ex-

traordinary muscular power with which Samdadchiemba was endowed. At length we effected a shelter from the wind and from a small cold rain with which it was accompanied. When our lodging was established, Samdadchiemba addressed us in these consolatory words: "My spiritual fathers, I told you we should not die today of thirst, but I am not at all sure that we don't run some risk of dying of hunger." In point of fact, there seemed no possibility of making a fire. There was not a tree, not a shrub, not a root to be seen. As to argols, they were out of the question; the rain had long since reduced that combustible of the desert to a liquid pulp.

We had formed our resolution and were on the point of making a supper of meal steeped in a little cold water when we saw approaching us two Tartars, leading a small camel. After the usual salutations, one of them said: "Sirs Lamas, this day the heavens have fallen; you, doubtless, have been unable to make a fire." "Alas! how should we make a fire, when we have no argols?" "Men are all brothers and belong each to the other. But laymen should honour and serve the holy ones; therefore it is that we have come to make a fire for you." The worthy Tartars had seen us setting up our tent, and, conceiving our embarrassment, had hastened to relieve it by a present of two bundles of argols. We thanked Providence for this unexpected succour, and the Dchiahour immediately made a fire and set about the preparation of an oatmeal supper. The quantity was on this occasion augmented in favour of the two friends who had so opportunely presented themselves.

During our modest repast we noticed that one of these Tartars was the object of especial attention on the part of his comrade. We asked him what military grade he occupied in the Blue Banner. "When the banners of Tchakar marched two years ago against the Rebels of the South,¹ I

¹ The English, then at war with the Chinese, were designated by the Tartars the *Rebels of the South*.

held the rank of Tchouanda." "What! were you in that famous war of the South? But how is it that you, shepherds of the plains, have also the courage of soldiers? Accustomed to a life of peace, one would imagine that you would never be reconciled to the terrible trade of a soldier, which consists in killing others or being killed yourselves." "Yes, yes, we are shepherds, it is true; but we never forget that we are soldiers also, and that the Eight Banners compose the army of reserve of the Grand Master (the Emperor). You know the rule of the Empire; when the enemy appears, they send against them, first, the Kitat soldiers; next, the banners of the Solon country are set in motion. If the war is not finished then, all they have to do is to give the signal to the banners of the Tchakar, the mere sound of whose march always suffices to reduce the rebels to subjection."

"Were all the banners of Tchakar called together for this southern war?" "Yes, all; at first it was thought a small matter, and everyone said that it would never affect the Tchakar. The troops of Kitat went first, but they did nothing; the banners of Solon also marched; but they could not bear the heat of the South; then the Emperor sent us his sacred order. Each man selected his best horse, removed the dust from his bow and quiver, and scraped the rust from his lance. In every tent a sheep was killed for the feast of departure. Women and children wept, but we addressed to them the words of reason. 'Here,' said we, 'for six generations have we received the benefits of the Sacred Master, and he has asked from us nothing in return. Now that he has need of us, can we hold back? He has given to us the fine region of Tchakar to be a pasture-land for our cattle, and at the same time a barrier for him against the Khalkhas. But now, since it is from the south the rebels came, we must march to the south.' Was not reason in our mouths, Sirs Lamas? Yes, we resolved to march. The Sacred Ordinance reached us at

sunrise, and already by noon the Bochehons at the head of their men stood by the Tchouanda; next to these were the Nourou-Tchayn, and then the Ougourda. The same day we marched to Peking; from Peking they led us to Tien-Tsin-Veï, where we remained for three months." "Did you fight?" asked Samdadchiemba; "did you see the enemy?" "No, they did not dare to appear. The Kitat told us every-



THE EMPEROR TAO-KOUANG.

where that we were marching upon certain and unavailing death. 'What can you do,' asked they, 'against sea-monsters? They live in the water like fish. When you least expect them, they appear on the surface and hurl their fire-bombs at you; while, the instant your bow is bent to shoot them, down they dive like frogs.' Then they essayed to frighten us; but we soldiers of the Eight Banners know not fear. Before our departure the great lamas had opened the Book of Celestial Secrets and had thence learned that the matter would end well

for us. The Emperor had attached to each Tchouanda a lama, learned in medicine and skilled in all the sacred auguries, who was to cure all the soldiers under him of the diseases of the climate and to protect us from the magic of the sea-monsters. What then had we to fear? The rebels, hearing that the invincible troops of Tchakar were approaching, were seized with fear and sought peace. The Sacred Master, of his immense mercy, granted it, and we returned to the care of our flocks."

The narrative of this "Illustrious Sword" was to us full of intense interest. We forgot for a moment the misery of our position amid the desert. We were eager to collect further details of the expedition of the English against China; but, night falling, the two Tartars took their way homeward.

The Red Banner. Awe-inspiring Effect of the Tartar Plains.

Thus left once more alone, our thoughts became exceedingly sad and sombre. We shuddered at the idea so recalled to us of the long night just commencing. How were we to get any sleep? The interior of the tent was little better than a mud heap; the great fire we had been keeping up had not half dried our clothes; it had merely resolved a portion of the water into a thick vapour that steamed about us. The furs which we used at night by way of mattress were in a deplorable condition, not a whit better for the purpose than the skin of a drowned cat. In this doleful condition of things a reflection, full of gentle melancholy, came into our minds and consoled us; we remembered that we were the disciples of Him who said: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests: but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

We became so fatigued after remaining awake the

greater part of the night that, sleep conquering us, we fell into a restless doze, seated over the embers of the fire, our arms crossed and our heads bent forward, in the most uncomfortable position possible.

It was with extreme delight that we hailed the termination of that long and dreary night. At day-break the blue, cloudless sky presaged compensation for the wretchedness of the preceding evening. By and by the sun, rising clear and brilliant, inspired us with the hope that our still wet clothes would soon get dry as we proceeded on our way. We speedily made all preparations for departure, and the caravan set forth. The weather was magnificent. By degrees the large grass of the prairie raised its broad head, which had been depressed by the heavy rain; the ground became firmer, and we experienced with delight the gentle heat of the sun's ascending rays. At last, to complete our satisfaction, we entered upon the plains of the Red Banner, the most picturesque of the whole Tchakar.

Tchakar signifies, in the Mongol tongue, "Border Land." This country is limited, on the east by the kingdom of Gechekten, on the west by Western Toumet, on the north by the Souniot, on the south by the Great Wall. Its extent is one hundred and fifty leagues long, by one hundred broad. The inhabitants of the Tchakar are all paid soldiers of the Emperor. The foot-soldiers receive twelve ounces of silver per annum, and the cavalry twenty-four.

It is in these pasturages of the Tchakar that are found the numerous and magnificent herds and flocks of the Emperor, consisting of camels, horses, cattle, and sheep. There are three hundred and sixty herds of horses alone, each numbering twelve hundred horses. It is easy from this one detail to imagine the enormous extent of animals possessed here by the Emperor. A Tartar, decorated with the white button, has

charge of each herd. At certain intervals inspectors-general visit the herds, and if any deficiency in the number is discovered, the chief herdsman has to make it good at his own cost. Notwithstanding this impending penalty, the Tartars do not fail to convert to their own use the wealth of the Sacred Master, by means of a fraudulent exchange. Whenever a Chinese has a broken-winded horse or a lame ox, he takes it to the imperial herdsman, who, for a trifling consideration, allows him to select what animal he pleases in exchange from among the imperial herds. Being thus always provided with the actual number of animals, they can benefit by their fraud in perfect security.

Never in more splendid weather had we traversed a more splendid country. The desert is at times horrible, hideous; but it has also its charms—charms all the more intensely appreciated because they are rare in themselves and because they would in vain be sought in populated countries. Tartary has an aspect altogether peculiar to itself: there is nothing in the world that at all resembles a Tartar landscape. In civilized countries you find at every step populous towns, a rich and varied cultivation, the thousand and one productions of arts and industry, the incessant movements of commerce. You are constantly impelled onwards, carried away, as it were, by some vast whirlwind. On the other hand, in countries where civilization has not as yet made its way into the light, you ordinarily find nothing but primeval forests in all the pomp of their exuberant and gigantic vegetation. The soul seems crushed beneath a nature all-powerful and majestic. There is nothing of the kind in Tartary. There are no towns, no edifices, no arts, no industry, no cultivation, no forests; everywhere it is prairie, sometimes interrupted by immense lakes, by majestic rivers, by rugged and imposing mountains; sometimes spreading out into vast, limitless plains. There, in these verdant solitudes, the bounds of which

seem lost in the remote horizon, you might imagine yourself gently rocking on the calm waves of some broad ocean. The aspect of the prairies of Mongolia excites neither joy nor sorrow, but rather a mixture of the two, a sentiment of gentle, religious melancholy which gradually elevates the soul, without wholly excluding from its contemplation the things of this world; a sentiment which belongs rather to heaven than to earth and which seems in admirable conformity with the nature of intellect served by organs.

You sometimes in Tartary come upon plains more animated than those you have just traversed; they are those whither the greater supply of water and the choicest pastures have attracted for a time a number of nomadic families. There you see rising in all directions tents of various dimensions, looking like balloons newly inflated and just about to take their flight into the air. Children, with a sort of hod at their backs, run about collecting argols, which they pile up in heaps around their respective tents. The matrons look after the calves, make tea in the open air, or prepare milk in various ways; the men, mounted on fiery horses and armed with a long pole, gallop about, guiding to the best pastures the great herds of cattle which undulate in the distance all around, like waves of the sea.

All of a sudden these pictures, so full of animation, disappear and you see nothing of that which of late was so full of life. Men, tents, herds, all have vanished in the twinkling of an eye. You merely see in the desert heaps of embers, half-extinguished fires, and a few bones, of which birds of prey are disputing the possession. Such are the sole vestiges which announce that a Mongol tribe has just passed that way. If you ask the reason of these abrupt migrations, it is simply this — the animals having devoured all the grass that grew in the vicinity, the chief had given the signal for departure; and all the shepherds, folding their tents, had driven their

herds before them and proceeded, no matter whither, in search of fresh fields and pastures new.

Tartar Customs. Their Urbanity. A Tartar Tent. Horsemen and Hunters.

Visiting amongst the Tartars is a frank, simple affair, altogether exempt from the endless formalities of Chinese gentility. On entering, you give the word of peace, *amor* or *mendou*, to the company generally. You then seat yourself on the right of the head of the family, whom you find squatting on the floor opposite the entrance. Next, everybody takes from a purse suspended at his girdle a little snuff-bottle, and mutual pinches accompany such phrases as these: "Is the pasturage with you rich and abundant?" "Are your herds in fine condition?" "Are your mares productive?" "Did you travel in peace?" "Does tranquillity prevail?" and so on. These questions and their answers being interchanged, always with intense gravity on both sides, the mistress of the tent, without saying a word, holds out her hand to the visitor. He as silently takes from his breast-pocket the small wooden bowl, the indispensable *va-de-mecum* of all Tartars, and presents it to his hostess, who fills it with tea and milk, and returns it. In the richer, more easily circumstanced families, visitors have a small table placed before them, on which is butter, oatmeal, grated millet, and bits of cheese, separately contained in little boxes of polished wood. These Tartar delicacies the visitors take mixed with their tea. Such as propose to treat their guests in a style of perfect magnificence make them partakers of a bottle of Mongol wine, warmed in the ashes. This wine is nothing more than skimmed milk, subjected for a while to vinous fermentation and distilled through a rude apparatus that does the office of an alembic. One must be a thorough Tartar to relish or even endure this beverage, the flavour and odour of which are alike insipid.

The Mongol tent, for about three feet from the ground, is cylindrical in form. It then becomes conical, like a pointed hat. The woodwork of the tent is composed below of a trellis-work of crossed bars, which fold up and expand at pleasure. Above these a circle of poles, fixed in the trellis-work, meets at the top, like the sticks of an umbrella. Over the woodwork is stretched, once or twice, a thick covering of coarse linen, and thus the tent is composed. The door, which is always a folding door, is low and narrow. A beam crosses it at the bottom by way of threshold, so that on entering you have at once to raise your feet and lower your head. Besides the door there is another opening at the top of the tent to let out the smoke. This opening can at any time be closed with a piece of felt fastened above it in the tent, which can be pulled over it by means of a string, the end of which hangs by the door.

The interior is divided into two compartments; that on the left as you enter is reserved for the men, and thither the visitors proceed. Any man who should enter on the right side would be considered excessively rude. The right compartment is occupied by the women, and there you find the culinary utensils: large earthen vessels of glazed earth, wherein to keep the store of water; trunks of trees of different sizes hollowed into the shape of pails and destined to contain the preparations of milk in the various forms which they make it undergo. In the centre of the tent is a large tripod, planted in the earth, and always ready to receive the large iron bell-shaped cauldron that stands by, ready for use.

Behind the hearth and facing the door is a kind of sofa, the most singular piece of furniture that we met with among the Tartars. At the two ends are two pillows, having at their extremity plates of copper, gilt and skilfully engraved. There is probably not a single tent where you do not find this little couch, which seems to be an essential

article of furniture; but, strange to say, during our long journey we never saw one of them which seemed to have been recently made. We had occasion to visit Mongol families where everything bore the mark of easy circumstances, even of affluence, but everywhere alike this singular couch was shabby and of ancient fabric. Yet it seems made to last for ever, and is regularly transmitted from generation to gener-



INTERIOR OF A TARTAR TENT.

ation. In the towns where Tartar commerce is carried on, you may hunt through every furniture-shop, every broker's, every pawnbroker's, but you meet with not one of these pieces of furniture, new or old.

At the side of the couch, towards the men's quarter, there is ordinarily a small square press, which contains the various odds and ends that serve to set off the costume of this simple people. This chest serves likewise as an altar for a small image of Buddha. The divinity, in wood or copper, is usually in a sitting posture, the legs crossed, and enveloped

up to the neck in a scarf of old yellow silk. Nine copper vases, of the size and form of our liqueur-glasses, are symmetrically arranged before Buddha. It is in these small chalices that the Tartars daily make to their idol offerings of water, milk, butter, and meal. A few Thibetian books, wrapped in yellow silk, perfect the decoration of the little pagoda. Those whose heads are shaved and who observe celibacy have alone the privilege of touching these prayer-books. A layman who should venture to take them into his impure and profane hands would commit a sacrilege. A number of goats' horns, fixed in the woodwork of the tent, complete the furniture of the Mongol habitation. On these hang the joints of beef or mutton destined for the family's use, vessels filled with butter, bows, arrows, and matchlocks; for there is scarcely a Tartar family which does not possess at least one fire-arm.

The odour pervading the interior of the Mongol tents is, to those not accustomed to it, disgusting and almost insupportable. This smell, so potent sometimes that it seems to make one's heart rise to one's throat, is occasioned by the mutton grease and butter with which everything on or about a Tartar is impregnated. It is on account of this habitual filth that they are called *Tsao-Ta-Dze* (Stinking Tartars) by the Chinese, themselves not altogether inodorous or by any means particular about cleanliness.

Among the Tartars, household and family cares rest entirely upon the woman; it is she who milks the cows and prepares the butter, cheese, &c.; who goes, no matter how far, to draw water; who collects the argol fuel, dries it, and piles it around the tent. The making of clothes, the tanning of skins, the fulling of cloth, all appertain to her, the sole assistance she obtains in these various labours being that of her sons, and then only while they are quite young.

The occupations of the men are of very limited range;

they consist wholly in conducting the flocks and herds to pasture. This, for men accustomed from their infancy to horseback, is rather an amusement than a labour. In point of fact, the nearest approach to fatigue they ever incur is when some of their cattle escape; they then dash off at full gallop in pursuit, up hill and down dale, until they have found the missing animals and brought them back to the herd. The Tartars sometimes hunt, but it is rather with a view to what they can catch than from any amusement they derive from the exercise; the only occasions on which they go out with their bows and matchlocks are when they desire to shoot roebucks, deer, or pheasants, as presents for their chiefs. Foxes they always course. To shoot them or take them in traps would, they consider, injure the skin, which is held in high estimation among them. They ridicule the Chinese immensely on account of their trapping these animals at night. "We," said a famous hunter of the Red Banner to us, "set about the thing in an honest straightforward way. When we see a fox, we jump on horseback and gallop after him till we have run him down."

With the exception of their equestrian exercises, the Mongol Tartars pass their time in an absolute *far niente*, sleeping all night, and squatting all day in their tents, dozing, drinking tea, or smoking. At intervals, however, the Tartar conceives a fancy to take a lounge abroad; and his lounge is somewhat different from that of the Parisian idler; he needs neither cane nor quizzing glass, but when the fancy occurs, he takes down his whip from its place above the door, mounts his horse, always ready saddled outside the door, and dashes off into the desert, no matter whither. When he sees another horseman in the distance, he rides up to him; when he sees the smoke of a tent, he rides up to that; the only object in either case being to have a chat with some new person.

A Search for Water. Sudden Typhoon.

The two days we passed in these fine plains of the Tchar, were not without good use. We were able at leisure to dry and repair our clothes and our baggage; but, above all, it gave us an opportunity to study the Tartars close at hand and to initiate ourselves in the habits of the nomad peoples. As we were making preparations for departure, these temporary neighbours aided us to fold our tent and to load our camels. "Sirs Lamas," said they, "you had better encamp tonight at the Three Lakes; the pasturage there is good and abundant. If you make haste, you will reach the place before sunset. On this side and on the other side of the Three Lakes there is no water for a considerable distance. Sirs Lamas, a good journey to you!" "Peace be with you, and farewell!" responded we, and with that proceeded once more on our way, Samdadchiemba heading the caravan, mounted on his little black mule. We quitted this encampment without regret, just as we had quitted preceding encampments; except, indeed, that here we left on the spot where our tent had stood, a greater heap of ashes, and that the grass around it was more trodden than was usual with us.

During the morning the weather was magnificent, though somewhat cold. But in the afternoon the north wind rose and began to blow with extreme violence. It soon became so cutting that we regretted we had not with us our great fur caps, to operate as a protector for the face. We hurried on, in order the sooner to reach the Three Lakes and to have the shelter there of our dear tent. In the hope of discovering these lakes that had been promised us by our late friends we were constantly looking right and left, but in vain. It grew late, and, according to the information of the Tartars, we began to fear we must have passed the only encampment we were likely to find that day. By dint of straining our eyes we

at length got sight of a horseman, slowly riding along the bottom of a lateral valley. He was at some distance from us, but it was essential that we should obtain information from him. M. Gabet accordingly hastened after him, at the utmost speed of his tall camel's long legs. The horseman heard the cries of the camel, looked back, and, seeing that someone was approaching him, turned his horse round and galloped towards M. Gabet. As soon as he got within ear-shot, "Holy personage," cried he, "has your eye perceived the yellow goats? I have lost all traces of them." "I have not seen the yellow goats; I seek water and cannot find it. Is it far hence?" "Whence came you? Whither go you?" "I belong to the little caravan you see yonder. We have been told that we should this evening on our way find lakes, upon the banks of which we could commodiously encamp; but hitherto we have seen nothing of the kind." "How could that be? 'Tis but a few minutes ago you passed within a few yards of the water. Sir Lama, permit me to attend your shadow; I will guide you to the Three Lakes." And so saying, he gave his horse three swinging lashes with his whip, in order to put it into a pace commensurate with that of the camel. In a minute he had joined us. "Men of prayer," said the hunter, "you have come somewhat too far; you must turn back. Look" (pointing with his bow) "yonder; you see those storks hovering over some reeds: there you will find the Three Lakes." "Thanks, brother," said we; "we regret that we cannot show you your yellow goats as clearly as you have shown us the Three Lakes." The Mongol hunter saluted us, with his clasped hands raised to his forehead, and we proceeded with entire confidence towards the spot he had pointed out. We had advanced but a few paces before we found indications of the near presence of some peculiar waters. The grass was less continuous and less green, and cracked under our animals' hoofs like dried leaves; the

white efflorescence of saltpetre manifested itself more and more thickly. At last we found ourselves on the bank of one lake, near which were two others. We immediately alighted and set about erecting our tent, but the wind was so violent that it was only after long labour and much patience that we completed the task.

While Samdadchiemba was boiling our tea, we amused ourselves with watching the camels as they luxuriously licked up the saltpetre with which the ground was powdered. Next they bent over the edge of the lake and inhaled long, insatiable draughts of the brackish water, which we could see ascending their long necks as up some flexible pump.

We had been for some time occupied in this not unpicturesque recreation when, all of a sudden, we heard behind us a confused, tumultuous noise, resembling the vehement flapping of sails beaten about by contrary and violent winds. Soon we distinguished amid the uproar loud cries proceeding from Samdadchiemba. We hastened towards him and were just in time to prevent, by our co-operation, the typhoon from uprooting and carrying off our linen *louvre*. Since our arrival the wind, augmenting in violence, had also changed its direction; so that it now blew exactly from the quarter facing which we had placed the opening of our tent. We had especial occasion to fear that the tent would be set on fire by the lighted argols that were driven about by the wind. Our first business therefore was to tack about, and after a while we succeeded in making our tent secure, and so got off with our fear and a little fatigue. The misadventure, however, put Samdadchiemba into a desperately bad humour throughout the evening; for the wind, by extinguishing the fire, delayed the preparation of his tea.

The wind fell as the night advanced, and by degrees the weather became magnificent; the sky was clear, the moon full and bright, and the stars glittered like diamonds. Alone,

in this vast solitude, we distinguished in the distance only the fantastic and indistinct outline of the mountains which loomed in the horizon like gigantic phantoms, while the only sound we heard was the cries of the thousand aquatic birds, as, on the surface of the lakes, they contended for the ends of the reeds and the broad leaves of the water-lily. Samdadchiemba was by no means a person to appreciate the charms of this tranquil scene. He had succeeded in again lighting the fire and was absorbed in the preparation of his tea. We accordingly left him squatted before the kettle.

Samdadchiemba's Story. Tribulations of an Apprentice Lama.

Samdadchiemba wiped his cup with the skirt of his jacket and, having replaced it in his bosom, addressed us gravely, thus: "My spiritual fathers, since you desire I should speak to you about myself, I will tell you a story. At the age of ten they put me into a great lamasery. I had for my especial master a very rough, cross man, who gave me the strap every day, because I could not repeat the prayers he taught me. But it was to no purpose he beat me; I could learn nothing; so he left off teaching me and sent me out to fetch water and collect fuel. But he continued to thrash me as hard as ever, until the life I led became quite insupportable, and at last I ran off with some provisions and made my way towards Tartary. After walking several days, haphazard, and perfectly ignorant where I was, I encountered the train of a Grand Lama who was repairing to Peking. I joined the caravan and was employed to take charge of a flock of sheep that accompanied the party and served for its food. There was no room for me in any of the tents, so I had to sleep in the open air. One evening I took up my quarters behind a rock, which sheltered me from the wind. In the morning, waking somewhat later than usual, I found the encampment struck and the people all gone. I was left alone in the desert. At this time I knew noth-

ing about east, west, north, or south; I had consequently no resource but to wander on at random, until I should find some Tartar station. I lived in this way for three years — now here, now there, exchanging such slight services as I could render for my food and tent-room. At last I reached Peking, and presented myself at the gate of the great lamasery of Hoang-Sse, which is entirely composed of Dchiahour and Thibetian lamas. I was at once admitted, and, my countrymen having clubbed together to buy me a red scarf and a yellow cap, I was enabled to join the chorus in the recitation of prayers and, of consequence, to claim my share in the distribution of alms.” — We interrupted Samdadchiemba at this point, in order to learn from him how he could take part in the recitation of prayers without having learned either to read or to pray. — “Oh,” said he, “the thing was easy enough. They gave me an old book; I held it on my knees and, mumbling out some gibberish between my lips, endeavoured to catch the tone of my neighbours. When they turned over a leaf, I turned over a leaf; so that, altogether, there was no reason why the leader of the chorus should take any notice of my manœuvre.

“One day, however, a circumstance occurred that very nearly occasioned my expulsion from the lamasery. An ill-natured lama, who had remarked my method of reciting the prayers, used to amuse himself with mocking me and creating a laugh at my expense. When the Emperor’s mother died, we were all invited to the Yellow Palace to recite prayers. Before the ceremony commenced, I was sitting quietly in my place, with my book on my knees, when this roguish fellow came gently behind me and, looking over my shoulder, mumbled out something or other in imitation of my manner. Losing all self-possession, I gave him so hard a blow upon the face that he fell on his back. The incident excited great confusion in the Yellow Palace. The superiors were informed

of the matter, and, by the severe rules of Thibetian discipline, I was liable to be flogged for three days with the black whip and then, my hands and feet in irons, to be imprisoned for a year in the tower of the lamasery. One of the principals, however, who had taken notice of me before, interposed in my favour. He went to the lamas who constituted the council of discipline and represented to them the fact that the disciple who had been struck was a person notorious for annoying his companions and that I had received extreme provocation from him. He spoke so warmly in my favour that I was pardoned on the mere condition of making an apology. I accordingly placed myself in the way of the lama whom I had offended. 'Brother,' said I, 'shall we go and drink a cup of tea together?' 'Certainly,' replied he; 'there is no reason why I should not drink a cup of tea with you.' We went out and entered the first tea-house that presented itself. After we were seated at one of the tables in the tea-room, I offered my snuff-bottle to my companion, saying: 'Elder brother, the other day we had a little disagreement; that was not well. You must confess that you were not altogether free from blame. I, on my part, admit that I dealt too heavy a blow. But the matter has grown old; we will think no more about it.' We then drank our tea, interchanged various civilities, and so the thing ended."

These and similar anecdotes of our Dchiahour had carried us far into the night. The camels, indeed, were already up and browsing their breakfast on the banks of the lake. We had but brief time before us for repose. "For my part," said Samdadchiemba, "I will not lie down at all, but look after the camels. Day will soon break. Meantime I'll make a good fire and prepare the *pan-tan*."

It was not long before Samdadchiemba roused us with the intimation that the sun was up, and the *pan-tan* ready. We at once rose, and, after eating a cup of *pan-tan*, or, in

other words, of oatmeal diluted with boiling water, we planted our little cross upon a hillock and proceeded upon our pilgrimage.

Destruction of a City of Grey Squirrels.

It was past noon when we came to a place where three wells had been dug, at short distances the one from the other. Although it was early in the day, we still thought we had better encamp here. A vast plain, on which we could discern no sort of habitation, stretched out before us to the distant horizon; and we might fairly conclude it destitute of water, since the Tartars had taken the trouble to dig these wells. We therefore set up our tent. We soon found, however, that we had selected a detestable encampment. With excessive nastiness of very brackish and very fetid water was combined extreme scarcity of fuel. We looked about for argols, but in vain. At last Samdadchiemba, whose eyes were better than ours, discerned in the distance a sort of enclosure, in which he concluded that cattle had been folded. He took a camel with him to the place in the hope of finding plenty of argols there, and he certainly returned with an ample supply of the article; but unfortunately the precious manure-fuel was not quite dry; it absolutely refused to burn. The Dchiahour essayed an experiment. He hollowed out a sort of furnace in the ground, surmounting it with a turf chimney. The structure was extremely picturesque, but it laboured under the enormous disadvantage of being wholly useless. Samdadchiemba arranged and rearranged his fuel, and puffed, and puffed, with the full force of his potent lungs. It was all lost labour. There was smoke enough and to spare; we were enveloped in smoke, but not a spark of fire; and the water in the kettle remained relentlessly passive. It was obvious that to boil our tea or heat oatmeal was out of the question. Yet we were anxious, at all events, to take the chill off the water, so as to

disguise, by the warmth, its brackish flavour and its disagreeable smell. We adopted this expedient.

You meet in the plains of Mongolia with a sort of grey squirrel living in holes like rats. These animals construct over the opening of their little dens a sort of miniature dome, composed of grass artistically twisted, and designed as a shelter from wind and rain. These little heaps of dry grass are of the form and size of mole-hills. The place where we had now set up our tent abounded with these grey squirrels. Thirst made us cruel and we proceeded to level the house-domes of these poor little animals, which retreated into their holes below as we approached them. By means of this vandalism we managed to collect a sackful of efficient fuel, and so warmed the water of the well, which was our only aliment during the day.

Our provisions had materially diminished, notwithstanding the economy to which the want of fire on this and other occasions had reduced us. There remained very little meal or millet in our store bags, when we learned, from a Tartar whom we met on the way, that we were at no great distance from a trading station called Chaborté (Slough). It lay, indeed, somewhat out of the route we were pursuing, but there was no other place at which we could supply ourselves with provisions until we came to Blue-Town, from which we were distant a hundred leagues. We turned therefore obliquely to the left and soon reached Chaborté.



CHAPTER III

WE arrived at Chaborté on the fifteenth day of the eighth moon, the anniversary of great rejoicings among the Chinese. This festival, known as the *Yué-Ping* (Loaves of the Moon), dates from the remotest antiquity. Its original purpose was to honour the moon with superstitious rites. On this solemn day all labour is suspended; the workmen receive from their employers a present of money; every person puts on his best clothes, and there is merry-making in every family. Relations and friends interchange cakes of various sizes, on which is stamped the image of the moon; that is to say, a hare crouching amid a small group of trees.

Since the fourteenth century this festival has borne a political character, little understood, apparently, by the Mongols, but the tradition of which is carefully preserved by the Chinese. About the year 1368 the Chinese were desirous of shaking off the yoke of Tartar dynasty, founded by Jenghiz Khan, which had then swayed the empire for nearly a hundred years. A vast conspiracy was formed throughout all the provinces, which was simultaneously to develop itself, on the fifteenth day of the eighth moon, by the massacre of the Mongol soldiers, who were billeted upon each Chinese family for the double purpose of maintaining themselves and their conquest. The signal was given by a letter concealed in the cakes which, as we have stated, are on that day mutually interchanged throughout the country. The massacre was effected, and the Tartar army, dispersed in the houses of the Chinese, utterly annihilated. This catastrophe put an end to the Mongol domination; and ever since, the

Chinese, in celebrating the festival of *Yué-Ping*, have been less intent upon the superstitious worship of the moon than upon the tragic event to which they owed the recovery of their national independence.

The Mongols seem to have entirely lost all memory of the sanguinary revolution; for every year they take their full part in the festival of the Loaves of the Moon, and thus celebrate, without apparently knowing it, the triumph which their enemies heretofore gained over their ancestors.

Feast in a Tartar Tent. Great Embarrassment over a Sheep's Tail.

At a gunshot from the place where we were encamped we perceived several Mongol tents, the size and character of which indicated easiness of circumstances in the proprietors. This indication was confirmed by the large herds of cattle, sheep, and horses which were pasturing around. While we were reciting the breviary in our tent, Samdadchiemba went to pay a visit to these Mongols. Soon afterwards we saw approaching an old man with a long, white beard, whose features bespoke him a personage of distinction. He was accompanied by a young lama and by a little boy, who held his hand. "Sirs Lamas," said the old man, "all men are brothers; but they who dwell in tents are united one with another as flesh with bone. Sirs Lamas, will you come and seat yourselves for a while in my poor abode? The fifteenth of this moon is a solemn epoch; you are strangers and travellers and therefore cannot this evening occupy your places at the hearth of your own noble family. Come and repose for a few days with us; your presence will bring us peace and happiness." We told the good old man that we could not wholly accept his offer, but that in the evening, after prayers, we would come and take tea with him and converse for a while about the Mongol nation. The venerable Tartar hereupon took his leave; but he had not been gone long before the

young lama who had accompanied him returned and told us that his people were awaiting our presence. We felt that we could not refuse at once to comply with an invitation so full of frank cordiality, and accordingly, having directed our Dchiahour to take good care of the tent, we followed the young lama who had come in quest of us.

Upon entering the Mongol tent we were struck and astonished at finding a cleanliness one is little accustomed to see in Tartary. There was not the ordinary coarse fireplace in the centre, and the eye was not offended with the rude dirty kitchen utensils which generally encumber Tartar habitations. It was obvious, besides, that everything had been prepared for a festival. We seated ourselves upon a large red carpet, and there was almost immediately brought to us, from the adjacent tent, which served as a kitchen, some tea with milk, some small loaves fried in butter; cheese, raisins, and jujubes.

After we had been introduced to the numerous Mongols by whom we found ourselves surrounded, the conversation insensibly turned upon the festival of the Loaves of the Moon. "In our western land," said we, "this festival is unknown; men there adore only Jehovah, the Creator of the heavens and of the earth, of the sun, of the moon, and of all that exists." — "Oh, what a holy doctrine!" exclaimed the old man, raising his clasped hands to his forehead; "the Tartars themselves, for that matter, do not worship the moon; but seeing that the Chinese celebrate this festival, they follow the custom without very well knowing why." — "You say truly; you do not, indeed, know why you celebrate this festival. That is what we heard in the land of the Kitat (Chinese). But do you know why the Kitat celebrate it?" and thereupon we related to these Mongols what we knew of the terrible massacre of their ancestors. Upon the completion of our narrative we saw the faces of all our audience full

of astonishment. The young men whispered to one another; the old man preserved a mournful silence, his head bent down, and big tears flowing from his eyes. "Brother rich in years," said we, "this story does not seem to surprise you as it does your young men, but it fills your heart with emotion." — "Holy personages," replied the elder, raising his head and wiping away the tears with the back of his hand, "the terrible event which occasions such consternation in the minds of my young men was not unknown to me, but I would I had never heard of it, and I always struggle against its recollection, for it brings the hot blood into the forehead of every Tartar whose heart is not sold to the Kitat. A day known to our great lamas will come when the blood of our fathers so shamefully assassinated will at length be avenged. When the holy man who is to lead us to vengeance shall appear, every one of us will rise and follow in his train; then we shall march, in the face of day, and require from the Kitat an account of the Tartar blood which they shed in the silence and dark secrecy of their houses. The Mongols celebrate every year this festival, most of them seeing in it merely an indifferent ceremony; but the Loaves of the Moon-day ever recalls, in the hearts of a few amongst us, the memory of the treachery to which our fathers fell victims, and the hope of just vengeance."

After a brief silence the old man went on: "Holy personages, whatever may be the associations of this day, in other respects it is truly a festival for us, since you have deigned to enter our poor habitation. Let us not further occupy our breasts with sad thoughts. Child," said he to a young man seated on the threshold of the tent, "if the mutton is boiled enough, clear away these things." This command having been executed, the eldest son of the family entered bearing in both hands a small oblong table, on which was a boiled sheep cut into four quarters, heaped one on the other.

The family being assembled round the table, the chief drew a knife from his girdle, severed the sheep's tail, and divided it into two equal pieces, which he placed before us.

With the Tartars the tail is considered the most delicious portion of their sheep, and accordingly the most honourable. These tails of the Tartarian sheep are of immense size and weight, the fat upon them alone weighing from six to eight pounds.

The fat and juicy tail having been offered a homage to the two stranger guests, the rest of the company, knife in hand, attacked the four quarters of the animal, and had speedily, each man, a huge piece before him. Plate or fork there was none; the knees supplied the absence of the one, the hands of the other, the flowing grease being wiped off, from time to time, upon the front of the jacket. Our own embarrassment was extreme. That great white mass of fat had been given to us with the best intentions, but, not quite clear of European prejudices, we could not make up our stomachs to venture, without bread or salt, upon the lumps of tallow that quivered in our hands. We briefly consulted, in our native tongue, as to what on earth was to be done under these distressing circumstances. Furtively to replace the horrible masses upon the table would be imprudent; openly to express to our Amphitryon our repugnance to this *par excellence* Tartarian delicacy was impossible, as wholly opposed to Tartar etiquette. We devised this plan: we cut the villainous tail into numerous pieces and insisted, in that day of general rejoicing, upon the company's partaking with us of this precious dish. There was infinite reluctance to deprive us of the treat; but we persisted and by degrees got entirely clear of the abominable mess, ourselves rejoicing, instead, in a cut from the leg, the savour of which was more agreeable to our early training.

Invocation to Timour.

The Homeric repast completed, a heap of polished bones alone remaining to recall it, a boy, taking from the goat's horn on which it hung a rude three-stringed violin, presented it to the chief, who, in his turn, handed it to a young man of modest mien, whose eyes lighted up as he received the instrument. "Noble and holy travellers," said the chief, "I have invited a Toolholos to embellish this entertainment with some recitations." The minstrel was already preluding with his fingers upon the strings of his instrument. Presently he began to sing, in a strong, emphatic voice, at times interweaving with his verses recitations full of fire and animation. It was interesting to see all those Tartar faces bent towards the minstrel and accompanying the meaning of his words with the movements of their features. The Toolholos selected for his subjects national traditions, which warmly excited the feelings of his audience. As to ourselves, very slightly acquainted with the history of Tartary, we took small interest in all those illustrious unknown whom the Mongol rhapsodist marshalled over the scene.

When he had sung for some time, the old man presented to him a large cup of milk-wine. The minstrel placed his instrument upon his knees and with evident relish proceeded to moisten his throat, parched with the infinitude of marvels he had been relating. While, having finished his draught, he was licking the brim of his cup, "Toolholos," said we, "the songs you have sung were all excellent. But you have as yet said nothing about the Immortal Tamerlane: the 'Invocation to Timour,' we have heard, is a famous song, dear to the Mongols." "Yes, yes," exclaimed several voices at once, "sing us the 'Invocation to Timour.'" There was a moment's silence, and then the Toolholos, having re-

freshed his memory, sang, in a vigorous and warlike tone, the following strophes:

When the divine Timour dwelt within our tents, the Mongol nation was redoubtable and warlike; its least movements made the earth bend; its mere look froze with fear the ten thousand peoples upon whom the sun shines.

O divine Timour, will thy great soul soon revive?
Return! return! we await thee, O Timour!

We live in our vast plains, tranquil and peaceful as sheep; yet our hearts are fervent and full of life. The memory of the glorious age of Timour is ever present to our minds. Where is the chief who is to place himself at our head, and render us once more great warriors?

O divine Timour, will thy great soul soon revive?
Return! return! we await thee, O Timour!

The young Mongol has arms wherewith to quell the wild horse, eyes wherewith he sees afar off in the desert the traces of the lost camel. Alas! his arms can no longer bend the bow of his ancestors; his eye cannot see the wiles of the enemy.

O divine Timour, will thy great soul soon revive?
Return! return! we await thee, O Timour!

We have burned the sweet-smelling wood at the feet of the divine Timour, our foreheads bent to the earth; we have offered to him the green leaf of tea and the milk of our herds. We are ready; the Mongols are on foot, O Timour! And do thou, O lama, send down good fortune upon our arrows and our lances.

O divine Timour, will thy great soul soon revive?
Return! return! we await thee, O Timour!

When the Tartar troubadour had completed this national song, he rose, made a low bow to the company, and, having suspended his instrument upon a wooden pin, took

his leave. "Our neighbours," said the old man, "are also keeping the festival, and expect the Toolholos: but, since you seem to listen with interest to Tartar songs, we will offer some other melodies to your notice. We have in our own family a brother who has in his memory a great number of airs cherished by the Mongols; but he cannot play; he is not a Toolholos. Come, brother Nymbo, sing; you have not got lamas of the West to listen to you every day."

The Mongol Singer.

A Mongol whom, seated as he was in a corner, we had not before noticed, at once rose and took the place of the departed Toolholos. The appearance of this personage was truly remarkable; his neck was completely buried in his enormous shoulders; his great dull staring eyes contrasted strangely with his dark face, half calcined, as it were, by the sun; his hair, or rather a coarse, uncombed mane, straggling down his back, completed the savageness of his aspect. He began to sing; but his singing was a mere counterfeit, an absurd parody. His grand quality was extreme long-windedness, which enabled him to execute roulades, complicated and continuous enough to throw any rational audience into fits. We soon became desperately tired of his noise, and watched with impatience for a moment's cessation that might give us an opportunity of retiring. But this was no easy matter; the villain divined our thoughts and was resolved to spite us. No sooner had he finished one air than he dove-tailed another into it, and so started afresh. In this way he went on until it was really quite late in the night. At length he paused for a moment to drink a cup of tea; he threw the beverage down his throat, and was just clearing his throat to commence anew when we started up, offered to the head of the family a pinch of snuff, and, having saluted the rest of the company, withdrew.

You often meet in Tartary these Toolholos, or wandering singers, who go about from tent to tent, celebrating in their melodies national events and personages. They are generally very poor; a violin and a flute, suspended from the girdle, are their only property; but they are always received by the Mongol families with kindness and honour; they often remain in one tent for several days, and on their departure are supplied with cheese, wine, tea, and so on to support them on their way. These poet-singers, who remind us of the minstrels and rhapsodists of Greece, are also very numerous in China; but they are, probably, nowhere so numerous or so popular as in Thibet.

Training of Young Tartars. The Mongol and His Horse.

The day after the festival, the sun had scarcely risen when a little boy presented himself at the entrance of our tent, carrying in one hand a wooden vessel full of milk and in the other hand a rude rush basket, in which were some new cheese and some butter. He was followed soon after by an old lama, attended by a Tartar who had on his shoulder a large bag of fuel. We invited them all to be seated. "Brothers of the West," said the lama, "accept these trifling presents from my master." We bowed in token of thanks, and Samdadchiemba hastened to prepare some tea, which we pressed the lama to stay and partake of. "I will come and see you this evening," said he; "but I cannot remain at present; for I have not set my pupil the prayer he has to learn this morning." The pupil in question was the little boy who had brought the milk. The old man then took his pupil by the hand, and they returned together to their tent.

The old lama was the preceptor of the family, and his function consisted in directing the little boy in the study of the Thibetian prayers. The education of the Tartars is

very limited. They who shave the head, the lamas, are, as a general rule, the only persons who learn to read and pray. There is no such thing throughout the country as a public school. With the exception of a few rich Mongols, who have their children taught at home, all the young lamas are obliged to resort to the lamaseries, wherein is concentrated all that exists in Tartary of arts or sciences or intellectual industry. The lama is not merely a priest; he is the painter, poet, sculptor, architect, physician; the head, heart, and oracle of the laity. The training of the young Mongols who do not resort to the lamaseries is limited, with the men, to perfecting the use of the bow and arrow and matchlock, and to their obtaining a thorough mastery of equestrianism. When a mere infant, the Mongol is weaned, and as soon as he is strong enough, he is stuck upon a horse's back behind a man, the animal is put to a gallop, and the juvenile rider, in order not to fall off, has to cling with both hands to his teacher's jacket. The Tartars thus become accustomed from a very early age to the movements of the horse, and by degrees and the force of habit they identify themselves, as it were, with the animal.

There is perhaps no spectacle more exciting than that of Mongol riders in chase of a wild horse. They are armed with a long, heavy pole, at the end of which is a running knot. They gallop, they fly after the horse they are pursuing down rugged ravines and up precipitous hills, in and out, twisting and twining in their rapid course, until they come up with their game. They then take the bridle of their own horses in their teeth, seize with both hands their heavy pole, and, bending forward, throw, by a powerful effort, the running knot round the wild horse's neck. In this exercise the greatest vigour must be combined with the greatest dexterity in order to enable them to stop short the powerful untamed animals with which they have to deal. It sometimes

happens that pole and cord are broken, but as to a horseman's being thrown, it is an occurrence we never saw or heard of.

The Mongol is so accustomed to horseback that he is altogether like a fish out of water when he sets foot on the ground. His step is heavy and awkward; and his bowed legs, his chest bent forward, his constant looking around him, all indicate a person who spends the greater portion of his time on the back of a horse or a camel.

When night overtakes the travelling Tartar, it often happens that he will not even take the trouble to alight for the purpose of repose. Ask people whom you meet in the desert where they slept last night, and you will as frequently as not have for answer, in a melancholy tone, "*Temen dero*" (on the camel). It is a singular spectacle to see caravans halting at noon, when they come to a rich pasturage. The camels disperse in all directions, browsing upon the high grass of the prairie, while the Tartars, astride between the two humps of the animal, sleep as profoundly as though they were sheltered in a good bed.

This incessant activity, this constant travelling, contributes to render the Tartars very vigorous and capable of supporting the most terrible cold, without appearing to be in the least affected by it. In the deserts of Tartary, and especially in the country of the Khalkhas, the cold is so intense that for a considerable portion of the winter the thermometer will not act, on account of the congelation of the mercury. The whole district is often covered with snow; and if at these times the south-west wind blows, the plain wears the aspect of a raging sea. The wind raises the snow in immense waves and impels the gigantic avalanches vehemently before it. Then the Tartars hurry courageously to the aid of their herds and flocks, and you see them dashing in all directions, exciting the animals by their cries, and driving them

to the shelter of some rock or mountain. Sometimes these intrepid shepherds stop short amid the tempest and stand erect for a time, as if defying the cold and the fury of the elements.

Education of Women.

The training of the Tartar women is not more refined than that of the men. They are not, indeed, taught the use of the bow and the matchlock, but in equitation they are as expert and as fearless as the men. Yet it is only on occasions that they mount on horseback; such, for example, as traveling, or when there is no man at home to go in search of a stray animal. As a general rule, they have nothing to do with the care of the herds and flocks.

Their chief occupation is to prepare the family meals and to make the family clothes. They are perfect mistresses of the needle; it is they who fabricate the hats, boots, coats, and other portions of the Mongol attire. The leather boots, for example, which they make are not indeed very elegant in form, but, on the other hand, their solidity is astonishing.

It was quite unintelligible to us how, with implements so rude and coarse as theirs, they could manufacture articles almost indestructible in their quality. It is true they take their time about them and get on very slowly with their work. The Tartar women excel in embroidery, which for taste and variety of pattern and for excellence of manipulation excited our astonishment. We think we may venture to say that nowhere in France would you meet with embroidery more beautiful and more perfect in fabric than that we have seen in Tartary.

The Tartars do not use the needle in the same way as the Chinese. In China they impel the needle perpendicularly down and up; whereas the Tartars impel it perpendicularly up and down. In France the manner is different from both; if

we recollect right, the French women impel the needle horizontally from right to left. We will not attempt to pronounce as to the respective merit of the three methods; we will leave the point to the decision of the respectable fraternity of tailors.

The Mournful City of Chaborté. Incident of the Lost Horses.

On the seventeenth of the moon we proceeded very early in the morning to the Chinese station of Chaborté, for the purpose of laying in a store of meal. Chaborté, as its Mongol name intimates, is built upon a slough. The houses are all made of mud, and surrounded each by an enclosure of high walls. The streets are irregular, tortuous, and narrow; the aspect of the whole town is sombre and sinister, and the Chinese who inhabit it have, if possible, a more knavish look than their countrymen anywhere else. The trade of the town comprehends all the articles in ordinary use with the Mongols — oatmeal and millet, cotton manufactures, and brick tea, which the Tartars receive in exchange for the products of the desert — salt, mushrooms, and furs. Upon our return we hastened to prepare for our departure. While we were packing up our baggage in the tent, Samdadchiemba went in search of the animals, which had been put to pasture in the vicinity. A moment afterwards he returned with the three camels. "There are the camels," said we, with gloomy anticipation, "but where are the horse and the mule? They were both at hand just now, for we tied their legs to prevent their straying." "They are stolen, in all probability. It never does to encamp too near the Chinese, whom everybody knows to be arrant horse-stealers." These words came upon us like a clap of thunder. However, it was not a moment for sterile lamentation; it was necessary to go in search of the thieves. We each mounted a camel and made a circuit in search of the animals, leaving our tent under the charge of Arsalan.

Our search being futile, we resolved to proceed to the Mongol encampment and inform them that the animals had been lost near their habitation.

By a law among the Tartars, when animals are lost from a caravan, the persons occupying the nearest encampment are bound either to find them or to replace them. It seems, no doubt, very strange to European views that because, without their consent or even knowledge, without being in the smallest degree known to them, you have chosen to pitch your tent near the tents of a Mongol party, you and your animals and your baggage are to be under their responsibility; but so it is. If a thing disappears, the law supposes that your next neighbour is the thief, or at all events an accomplice. This it is which has contributed to render the Mongols so skilful in tracking animals. A mere glance at the slight traces left by an animal upon the grass suffices to inform the Mongol pursuer how long since it passed and whether or not it bore a rider; and the track once found, they follow it throughout all its meanderings, however complicated.

We had no sooner explained our loss to the Mongol chief than he said to us cheerfully: "Sirs Lamas, do not permit sorrow to invade your hearts. Your animals cannot be lost; in these plains there are neither robbers nor associates of robbers. I will send in quest of your horses. If we do not find them, you may select what others you please in their place from our herd. We would have you leave this place as happy as you came to it." While he was speaking, eight of his people mounted on horseback and dashed off in as many directions upon the quest, each man trailing after him his lasso, attached to the long, flexible pole we have described. After a while they all collected in one body and galloped away as hard as they could towards the town. "They are on the track now, holy sirs," said the chief, who was watching their movements by our sides, "and you will have your

horses back very soon. Meanwhile come within my tent and drink some tea."

In about two hours a boy appeared at the entrance of the tent and announced the return of the horsemen. We hastened outside and in the track which we had pursued saw something amid a cloud of dust which seemed horsemen galloping like the wind. We presently discovered the eight Tartars, dashing along like so many mad centaurs, our stray animals, each held by a lasso, in the midst of them. On their arrival they alighted and with an air of satisfaction said: "We told you nothing was ever lost in our country." We thanked the generous Mongols for the great service they had rendered us, and, bidding adieu to them, saddled our horses and departed on our way to the Blue City.

The Ruined Cities of Mongolia.

On the third day we came, in the solitude, upon an imposing and majestic monument of antiquity — a large city utterly abandoned. Its turreted ramparts, its watch-towers, its four great gates, facing the four cardinal points, were all there, perfect in preservation, except that, besides being three fourths buried in the soil, they were covered with a thick coating of turf. Arrived opposite the southern gate, we directed Samdadchiemba to proceed quietly with the animals while we paid a visit to the Old Town, as the Tartars designate it. Our impression as we entered the vast enclosure was one of mingled awe and sadness. There were no ruins of any sort to be seen, but only the outline of a large and fine town, becoming absorbed below by gradual accumulations of wind-borne soil, and above by a winding-sheet of turf. The arrangement of the streets and the position of the principal edifices were indicated by the inequalities of ground. The only living things we found here were a young Mongol shepherd, silently smoking his pipe, and the flock of goats

he tended. We questioned the former as to when the city was built, by whom, when abandoned, and why? We might as well have interrogated his goats; he knew no more than that the place was called the Old Town.

Such remains of ancient cities are of no unfrequent occurrence in the deserts of Mongolia, but everything connected with their origin and history is buried in darkness. Oh, with what sadness does such a spectacle fill the soul! The ruins of Greece, the superb remains of Egypt — all these, it is true, tell of death; all belong to the past; yet when you gaze upon them, you know what they are; you can retrace, in memory, the revolutions which have occasioned the ruins and the decay of the country around them. Descend into the tomb wherein was buried alive the city of Herculaneum — you find there, it is true, a gigantic skeleton, but you have within you historical associations wherewith to galvanize it. But of these old abandoned cities of Tartary not a tradition remains; they are tombs without an epitaph, amid solitude and silence, uninterrupted except when the wandering Tartars halt for a while within the ruined enclosures, because there the pastures are richer and more abundant.

Although, however, nothing positive can be stated respecting these remains, the probabilities are that they date no earlier back than the thirteenth century, the period when the Mongols rendered themselves masters of the Chinese Empire, of which they retained possession for more than a hundred years. During their domination, say the Chinese annals, they erected in northern Tartary many large and powerful cities. Towards the middle of the fourteenth century the Mongol dynasty was expelled from China; the Emperor Young-Lo, who desired to exterminate the Tartars, invaded their country and burned their towns, making no fewer than three expeditions against them into the desert, two hundred leagues north of the Great Wall.

After leaving behind us the Old Town, we came to a broad road crossing from north to south that along which we were travelling from east to west, the ordinary route of the Russian embassies on their way to Peking.

Prayers for a Sick Woman.

This road to Kiakhta, which we thus came upon unexpectedly amid the deserts of Tartary, created a deep emotion in our hearts. "Here," said we to each other, "here is a road which leads to Europe!" Our native land presented itself before our imagination, and we spontaneously entered upon the road, which connected us with our beloved France. The conversation that rose to our lips from our hearts was so pleasing that we insensibly advanced. The sight of some Mongol tents on an adjacent eminence recalled us to a sense of our position, and at the same moment a loud cry came from a Tartar whom we saw gesticulating in front of the tents. Not understanding the cry to be addressed to us, we turned and were proceeding on our route when the Tartar, jumping on his horse, galloped after us; upon reaching us, he alighted and knelt before us. "Holy sirs," said he, raising his hands before Heaven, "have pity upon me and save my mother from death. I know your power is infinite: come and preserve my mother by your prayers." The parable of the good Samaritan came before us, and we felt that charity forbade us to pass on without doing all we could in the matter. We therefore turned once more, in order to encamp near the Tartars.

While Samdadchiemba arranged our tent, we went, without loss of time, to tend the sick woman, whom we found in a very deplorable state. "Inhabitants of the desert," said we to her friends, "we know not the use of simples, we are unacquainted with the secrets of life, but we will pray to Jehovah for this sick person. You have not heard of this

Almighty God — your lamas know him not; but, be assured, Jehovah is the master of life and of death.” Circumstances did not permit us to dwell on the theme to these poor people, who, absorbed in grief and anxiety, could pay little attention to our words. We returned to our tent to pray, the Tartar accompanying us. When he saw our breviary, “Are these,” asked he, “the all-powerful prayers to Jehovah of which you spoke?” “Yes,” said we; “these are the only true prayers, the only prayers than can save.” Thereupon he prostrated himself successively before each of us, touching the ground with his forehead; then he took the breviary and raised it to his head in token of respect. During our recitation of the prayers for the sick the Tartar remained seated at the entrance of the tent, preserving a profound and religious silence. When we had finished, “Holy men,” said he, again prostrating himself, “how can I make acknowledgments for your great benefits? I am poor; I can offer you neither horse nor sheep.” “Mongol brother,” we replied, “the priests of Jehovah may not offer up prayers for the sake of enriching themselves; since thou art not rich, accept from us this trifling gift”; and we presented to him a fragment of a tea-brick. The Tartar was profoundly moved with this proceeding; he could not say a word, his only answer to us was tears of gratitude.

We heard next morning with pleasure that the Tartar woman was much better. We would fain have remained a few days in the place, in order to cultivate the germ of the true faith thus planted in the bosom of this family; but we were compelled to proceed. Some of the Tartars escorted us a short distance on our way.

Mongol Medicine.

Medicine in Tartary, as we have already observed, is exclusively practised by the lamas. When illness attacks any-

one, his friends run to the nearest monastery for a lama, whose first proceeding upon visiting the patient is to run his fingers over the pulse of both wrists simultaneously, as the fingers of a musician run over the strings of an instrument. The Chinese physicians feel both pulses also, but in succession. After due deliberation the lama pronounces his opinion as to the particular nature of the malady. According to the religious belief of the Tartars, all illness is owing to the visitation of a *Tchutgour*, or demon; but the expulsion of the demon is first a matter of medicine. The lama physician next proceeds, as lama apothecary, to give the specific befitting the case; the Tartar pharmacopœia rejecting all mineral chemistry, the lama remedies consist entirely of vegetables pulverized and either infused in water or made up into pills. If the lama doctor happens not to have any medicine with him, he is by no means disconcerted; he writes the names of the remedies upon little scraps of paper, moistens the papers with his saliva, and rolls them up into pills, which the patient tosses down with the same perfect confidence as though they were genuine medicaments. To swallow the name of a remedy or the remedy itself, say the Tartars, comes to precisely the same thing.

The medical assault of the usurping demon being applied, the lama next proceeds to spiritual artillery, in the form of prayers, adapted to the quality of the demon who has to be dislodged. If the patient is poor, the *Tchutgour* visiting him can evidently be only an inferior *Tchutgour*, requiring merely a brief, offhand prayer, sometimes merely an interjectional exorcism. If the patient is very poor, the lama troubles himself with neither prayer nor pill, but goes away recommending the friends to wait with patience until the sick person gets better or dies, according to the decree of *Hormoustha*. But where the patient is rich, the possessor of large flocks, the proceedings are altogether different. First,

it is obvious that a devil who presumes to visit so eminent a personage must be a potent devil, one of the chiefs of the lower world; and it would not be decent for a great *Tchutgour* to travel like a mere sprite; the family, accordingly, are directed to prepare for him a handsome suit of clothes, a pair of rich boots, a fine horse, ready saddled and bridled; otherwise the devil will never think of going, physic or exorcize him how you may. It is even possible, indeed, that one horse will not suffice, for the demon, in very rich cases, may turn out, upon inquiry, to be so high and mighty a prince that he has with him a number of courtiers and attendants, all of whom have to be provided with horses.

Everything being arranged, the ceremony commences. The lama and numerous co-physicians, called in from his own and other adjacent monasteries, offer up prayers in the rich man's tents for a week or a fortnight, until they perceive that the devil is gone — that is to say, until they have exhausted all the disposable tea and sheep. If the patient recovers, it is a clear proof that the prayers have been efficaciously recited; if he dies, it is a still greater proof of the efficaciousness of the prayers, for not only is the devil gone, but the patient has transmigrated to a state far better than that he has quitted.

Terrifying Exorcism.

The prayers recited by the lamas for the recovery of the sick are sometimes accompanied with very dismal and alarming rites. The aunt of Tokoura, chief of an encampment in the Valley of Dark Waters, visited by M. Huc, was seized one evening with an intermittent fever. "I would invite the attendance of the doctor lama," said Tokoura, "but if he finds that there is a very big *Tchutgour* present, the expenses will ruin me." He waited for some days; but as his aunt grew worse and worse, he at last sent for a lama;

his anticipations were confirmed. The lama pronounced that a demon of considerable rank was present, and that no time must be lost in expelling him. Eight other lamas were forthwith called in, who at once set about the construction, in dried herbs, of a great puppet, which they entitled the "Demon of Intermittent Fevers," and which, when completed, they placed on its legs by means of a stick, in the patient's tent.

The ceremony began at eleven o'clock at night; the lamas ranged themselves in a semi-circle round the upper portion of the tent, with cymbals, sea-shells, bells, tambourines, and other instruments of the noisy Tartar music. The remainder of the circle was completed by the members of the family, squatting on the ground close to one another, the patient kneeling, or rather crouched on her heels, opposite the "Demon of Intermittent Fevers." The lama doctor-in-chief had before him a large copper basin filled with millet, and some little images made of paste. The dung-fuel threw, amid much smoke, a fantastic and quivering light over the strange scene.

Upon a given signal the clerical orchestra executed an overture harsh enough to frighten Satan himself, the lay congregation beating time with their hands to the charivari of clanging instruments and ear-splitting voices. The diabolical concert over, the Grand Lama opened the book of exorcisms, which he rested on his knees. As he chanted one of the forms, he took from the basin, from time to time, a handful of millet, which he threw east, west, north, and south, according to the rubric. The tones of his voice, as he prayed, were sometimes mournful and suppressed, sometimes vehemently loud and energetic. All of a sudden he would quit the regular cadence of prayer and have an outburst of apparently indomitable rage, abusing the herb puppet with fierce invectives and furious gestures. The exorcism terminated, he gave a signal by stretching out his arms, right and left, and

the other lamas struck up a tremendously noisy chorus, in hurried, dashing tones; all the instruments were set to work, and meantime the lay congregation, having started up with one accord, ran out of the tent, one after the other, and, tearing round it like mad people, beat it at their hardest with sticks, yelling all the while at the pitch of their voices in a manner to make ordinary hair stand on end. Having thrice performed this demoniac round, they re-entered the tent as precipitately as they had quitted it, and resumed their seats. Then, all the others covering their faces with their hands, the Grand Lama rose and set fire to the herb figure. As soon as the flames rose, he uttered a loud cry, which was repeated with interest by the rest of the company. The laity immediately rose, seized the burning figure, carried it into the plain, away from the tents, and there, as it consumed, anathematized it with all sorts of imprecations; the lamas meantime squatted in the tent, tranquilly chanting their prayers in a grave, solemn tone.

Upon the return of the family from their valorous expedition, the praying was exchanged for joyous felicitations. By and by, each person provided with a lighted torch, the whole party rushed simultaneously from the tent and formed into a procession, the laymen first, then the patient, supported on either side by a member of the family, and lastly the nine lamas, making night hideous with their music. In this style the patient was conducted to another tent, pursuant to the orders of the lama, who had declared that she must absent herself from her own habitation for an entire month.

After this strange treatment, the malady did not return. The probability is that the lamas, having ascertained the precise moment at which the fever-fit would recur, met it at the exact point of time by this tremendous counter-excitement, and overcame it.

Though the majority of the lamas seek to foster the

ignorant credulity of the Tartars, in order to turn it to their own profit, we have met some of them who frankly avowed that duplicity and imposture played a considerable part in all their ceremonies. The superior of a lamasery said to us one day: "When a person is ill, the recitation of prayers is proper, for Buddha is the master of life and death; it is he who rules the transmigration of beings. To take remedies is also fitting, for the great virtue of medicinal herbs also comes to us from Buddha. That the Evil One may possess a rich person is credible, but that in order to repel the Evil One the way is to give him dress and a horse and what not, this is a fiction invented by ignorant and deceiving lamas, who desire to accumulate wealth at the expense of their brothers."

Funeral Customs.

The manner of interring the dead among the Tartars is not uniform. The lamas are only called in to assist at extremely grand funerals. Towards the Great Wall, where the Mongols are mixed up with the Chinese, the custom of the latter in this particular, as in others, has insensibly prevailed. There the corpse is placed, after the Chinese fashion, in a coffin, and the coffin in a grave. In the desert, among the true nomadic tribes, the entire ceremony consists in conveying the dead to the tops of hills or the bottoms of ravines, there to be devoured by the birds and beasts of prey. It is really horrible to travellers through the deserts of Tartary to see, as they constantly do, human remains, for which the eagles and the wolves are contending.

The richer Tartars sometimes burn their dead with great solemnity. A large furnace of earth is constructed in a pyramidal form. Just before it is completed, the body is placed inside, standing, surrounded with combustibles. The edifice is then completely covered in, with the exception of a small hole at the bottom to admit fire, and another at the top

to give egress to the smoke and keep up a current of air. During the combustion the lamas surround the tomb and recite prayers. The corpse being burnt, they demolish the furnace and remove the bones, which they carry to the Grand Lama; he reduces them to a very fine powder, and, having added to them an equal quantity of meal, he kneads the whole with care and constructs, with his own hands, cakes of different sizes, which he places one upon the other, in the form of a pyramid. When the bones have been thus prepared by the Grand Lama, they are transported with great pomp to a little tower built beforehand in a place indicated by the diviner.

They almost always give to the ashes of the lamas a sepulture of this description. You meet with a great number of these monumental towers on the summits of the mountains, and in the neighbourhood of the lamaseries; and you may find them in countries whence the Mongols have been driven by the Chinese. In other respects these countries scarcely retain any trace of the Tartars: the lamaseries, the pasturages, the shepherds, with their tents and flocks, all have disappeared, to make room for new people, new monuments, new customs. A few small towers raised over graves alone remain there, as if to assert the rights of the ancient possessors of these lands and to protest against the invasion of the Kitat.

The most celebrated seat of Mongol burials is in the province of Chan-Si, at the famous Lamasery of Five Towers (*Ou-Tay*). According to the Tartars, the Lamasery of Five Towers is the best place you can be buried in. The ground in it is so holy that those who are so fortunate as to be interred there are certain of a happy transmigration thence. The marvellous sanctity of this place is attributed to the presence of Buddha, who for some centuries past has taken up his abode there in the interior of a mountain. In 1842 the noble Tok-

oura, of whom we have already had occasion to speak, conveying the bones of his father and mother to the Five Towers, had the infinite happiness to behold there the venerable Buddha. "Behind the great monastery," he told us, "there is a very lofty mountain, which you must climb by creeping on your hands and feet. Just towards the summit you come to a portico cut in the rock; you lie down on the earth and look through a small aperture not larger than the bowl of a pipe. It is some time before you can distinguish anything, but by degrees your eye gets used to the place, and you have the happiness of beholding, at length, in the depths of the mountain the face of the ancient Buddha. He is seated cross-legged, doing nothing. There are around him lamas of all countries, who are continually paying homage to him."

Whatever you may think of Tokoura's narrative, it is certain that the Tartars and the Thibetians have given themselves up to an inconceivable degree of fanaticism in reference to the Lamasery of the Five Towers. You frequently meet, in the deserts of Tartary, Mongols carrying on their shoulders the bones of their parents to the Five Towers, to purchase, almost at its weight in gold, a few feet of earth, whereon they may raise a small mausoleum. Even the Mongols of Torgot perform journeys occupying a whole year, and attended with immense difficulty, to visit for this purpose the province of Chan-Si.

Human Sacrifices. Children Stuffed with Mercury.

The Tartar kings sometimes make use of a sepulture which is the height of extravagance and barbarism. The royal corpse is conveyed to a vast edifice constructed of bricks and adorned with numerous statues representing men, lions, elephants, tigers, and various subjects of Buddhist mythology. With the illustrious defunct they bury in a large cavern, constructed in the centre of the building, large sums

of gold and silver, royal robes, precious stones — in short, everything which he may need in another life. These monstrous interments sometimes cost the lives of a great number of slaves. They take children of both sexes, remarkable for their beauty, and make them swallow mercury till they are suffocated; in this way they preserve, they say, the freshness and ruddiness of their countenance, so as to make them appear still alive. These unfortunate victims are placed upright round the corpse of their master, continuing, in this fashion, to serve him as during life. They hold in their hands the pipe, fan, the small phial of snuff, and the numerous other knick-knacks of the Tartar kings.

To protect these buried treasures, they place in the cavern a kind of bow, capable of discharging a number of arrows, one after the other. This bow, or rather these several bows joined together, are all bent, and the arrows ready to fly. They place this infernal machine in such a manner that, on opening the door of the cavern, the movement causes the discharge of the first arrow at the man who enters; the discharge of the first arrow causes the discharge of the second, and so on to the last — so that the unlucky person whom covetousness or curiosity should induce to open the door would fall, pierced with many arrows, in the tomb he sought to profane. They sell these murderous machines ready prepared by the bow-makers. The Chinese sometimes purchase them, to guard their houses in their absence.

The Kingdom of Éfe. The Young Wrestlers.

After a march of two days we entered the district called the kingdom of Éfe.

A Tartar horseman travelled with us a part of our way through the kingdom. From time to time he showed us children engaged in wrestling. "This," said he, "is the favourite exercise with all the inhabitants of our kingdom of Éfe.

We esteem in a man but two things — his being a good horseman and his being a good wrestler." There was one group of youthful wrestlers whom, exercising as they were on the side of our road, we were enabled to watch closely and at leisure; their ardour redoubled when they saw we were looking at them. The tallest of the party, who did not seem more than eight or nine years old, took in his arms one of his companions, nearly his own height and very fat, and amused himself with tossing him above his head and catching him again, as you would a ball. He repeated this feat seven or eight times, and at every repetition we trembled for the life of the boy; but the rest of the children only gambolled about, applauding the success of the performers.

Encounter with Three Wolves. How These Beasts Are Hunted.

On the twenty-second day of the eighth moon, on quitting the petty kingdom of Éfe, we ascended a mountain on the sides of which grew thickets of fir and birch. The sight of these at first gave us great pleasure. The deserts of Tartary are in general so monotonously bare that you cannot fail to experience a pleasurable sensation when you come upon some occasional trees on your way. Our first feelings of joy were, however, soon demolished by a sentiment of a very different nature; we were as though frozen with horror on perceiving at a turn of the mountain, three enormous wolves, that seemed awaiting us with calm intrepidity. At sight of these villainous beasts we stopped suddenly and, as it were, instinctively. After a moment of general stupor Samdadchimbamba descended from his mule and wrung the noses of our camels. The expedient succeeded marvellously; the poor beasts sent forth such piercing and terrible cries that the scared wolves dashed off with all speed. Arsalan, who saw them flee, thinking undoubtedly that it was himself they were afraid of, pursued them at the utmost speed of his

legs; soon the wolves turned round, and our tent-porter would have been infallibly devoured had not M. Gabet rushed to his aid, uttering loud cries and wringing the nose of his camel; the wolves, having taken flight a second time, disappeared without our again thinking of pursuing them.

Although the want of population might seem to abandon the interminable deserts of Tartary to wild beasts, wolves are rarely met with. This arises, no doubt, from the incessant and vindictive warfare which the Mongols wage against them. They pursue them everywhere to the death, regarding them as their capital enemy, on account of the great damage they may inflict upon their flocks. The announcement that a wolf has made its appearance in a neighbourhood is for everyone a signal to mount his horse. As there are always near each tent horses ready saddled, in an instant the plain is covered with numerous cavalry, all armed with their long lasso-pole. The wolf in vain flees in every direction: it meets everywhere horsemen who rush upon it. There is no mountain so rugged or arduous up which the Tartar horses, agile as goats, cannot pursue it. The horseman who is at length successful in passing round its neck the running knot gallops off at full speed, dragging the wolf after him to the nearest tent; there they strongly bind its muzzle, so that they may torture it securely; and then, by way of finale, skin it alive, and turn it off. In summer the wretched brute lives in this condition several days; but in winter, exposed without a skin to the rigours of the season, it dies forthwith, frozen with cold.



CHAPTER IV

WITH some rare exceptions, the imperial benefactions go very little way towards the construction of the lamaseries. Those grand and sumptuous monuments, so often met with in the desert, are due to the free and spontaneous zeal of the Mongols. So simple and economical in their dress and manner of living, these people are generous—we might say, astonishingly prodigal—in all that concerns religious worship and expenditure. When it is resolved to construct a Buddhist temple, surrounded by its lamasery, lama collectors go on their way forthwith, provided with passports attesting the authenticity of their mission. They disperse themselves throughout the kingdom of Tartary, beg alms from tent to tent in the name of the Old Buddha. Upon entering a tent and explaining the object of their journey, by showing the sacred basin in which the offerings are placed, they are received with joyful enthusiasm. There is no one but gives something. The rich place in the *badir* ingots of gold and silver; those who do not possess the precious metals offer oxen, horses, or camels. The poorest contribute according to the extent of their means; they give lumps of butter, furs, ropes made of the hair of camels and horses. Thus in a short time are collected immense sums. Then in these deserts, apparently so poor, you see rise up, as if by enchantment, edifices whose grandeur and wealth would defy the resources of the richest potentates. It was doubtless in the same manner, by the zealous co-operation of the faithful, that were constructed in Europe those magnificent cathedrals whose stupendous beauty is an abiding reproach to modern selfishness and indifference.

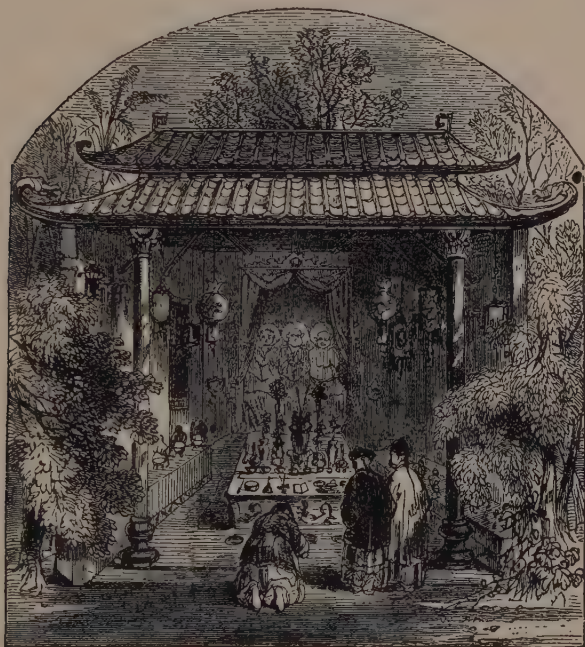
It would be difficult to say to what order of architecture the Buddhist temples of Tartary belong. They are always fantastical constructions of monstrous colonnades, peristyles with twisted columns, and endless ascents. Opposite the great gate is a kind of altar of wood or stone, usually in the form of a cone reversed; on this the idols are placed, mostly seated cross-legged. These idols are of colossal stature, but their faces are fine and regular, except in the preposterous length of the ears; they belong to the Caucasian type and are wholly distinct from the monstrous, diabolical physiognomies of the Chinese Pou-Ssa.

Before the great idol, and on the same level with it, is a gilt seat where the living Fô, the Grand Lama of the lamasery, is seated. All around the temple are long tables almost level with the ground, a sort of ottomans covered with carpet; and between each row there is a vacant space, so that the lamas may move about freely.

When the hour for prayer is come, a lama whose office it is to summon the guests of the convent proceeds to the great gate of the temple and blows, as loud as he can, a sea-conch, successively towards the four cardinal points. Upon hearing this powerful instrument, audible for a league round, the lamas put on the mantle and cap of ceremony and assemble in the great inner court. When the time is come, the sea-conch sounds again, the great gate is opened, and the living Fô enters the temple. As soon as he is seated upon the altar, all the lamas lay their red boots at the vestibule and advance barefoot and in silence. As they pass him, they worship the living Fô by three prostrations, and then place themselves upon the divan, each according to his dignity. They sit cross-legged, always in a circle.

As soon as the master of the ceremonies has given the signal, by tinkling a little bell, each murmurs in a low voice a preliminary prayer, whilst he unrolls upon his knees the

prayers directed by the rubric. After this short recitation, follows a moment of profound silence; the bell is again rung, and then commences a psalm in double chorus, grave and melodious. The Thibetian prayers, ordinarily in verse and written in a metrical and well-cadenced style, are marvel-



INTERIOR OF BUDDHIST TEMPLE.

lously adapted for harmony. At certain pauses, indicated by the rubric, the lama musicians execute a piece of music, little in concert with the melodious gravity of the psalmody. It is a confused and deafening noise of bells, cymbals, tambourines, sea-conchs, trumpets, pipes, &c., each musician playing on his instrument with a kind of ecstatic fury, trying with his brethren who shall make the greatest noise.

Marvellous Dissection of a Deer. The Unexpected Guest.

As we were entering upon the Red Banner, we met a Mongol hunter, who was carrying behind him on his horse a fine roebuck he had just killed. We had been so long reduced to our insipid oatmeal, seasoned with a few bits of mutton fat, that the sight of the venison inspired us with a somewhat decided desire to vary our entertainment; we felt, moreover, that our stomachs, weakened by our daily privations, imperiously demanded a more substantial alimentation. After saluting the hunter, therefore, we asked him if he was disposed to sell his venison. "Sirs Lamas," replied he, "when I placed myself in ambush to await the deer, I had no thought of trading in my head. The Chinese carmen stationed up yonder beyond Tchortchi wanted to buy my game for four hundred sapeks, but I said no. But to you, Sirs Lamas, I speak not as to Kitat; there is my roebuck: give me what you please for it." We told Samdadchiemba to pay the hunter five hundred sapeks; and, hanging the venison over the neck of one of the camels, we proceeded on our way.

Five hundred sapeks are equivalent to about fifty sous, and this is the ordinary price of a roebuck in Tartary; the price of a sheep is thrice that amount. Venison is little esteemed by the Tartars, and still less by the Chinese; black meat, say they, is never so good as white. Yet in the larger cities of China, and especially at Peking, black meat has honourable place on the tables of the rich and of the mandarins, a circumstance, however, to be attributed to the scarcity of the article, and a desire for variety. The Manchus, indeed, do not come within the preceding observation; for, great lovers of hunting, they are also great lovers of its produce, and especially of bears, stags, and pheasants.

It was just past noon when we came to a spot marvellously beautiful. After passing through a narrow open-

ing between two rocks whose summits seemed lost in the clouds, we found ourselves in a large enclosure, surrounded by lofty hills, on which grew a number of scattered pines. An abundant fountain supplied a small stream, whose banks were covered with angelica and wild mint. The rivulet, after making the circuit of the enclosure, amid rich grass, had its issue thence by an opening similar to that by which we had entered the place. No sooner had a glance comprehended the attractions of the spot than Samdadchiemba moved that we should at once set up our tent there. "Let us go no farther today," said he; "let us encamp here. We have not gone far this morning, it is true, and the sun is still very high; but we have got the venison to prepare and should therefore encamp earlier than usual." No one opposing the honourable gentleman's motion, it was put and carried unanimously, and we proceeded to set up our tent by the side of the spring.

Samdadchiemba had often talked of his great dexterity in the dissection of animals, and he was delighted with this opportunity of displaying his excellence in this respect. Having suspended the roebuck from a pine-branch, sharpened his knife upon a tent-pin, and turned up his sleeves to the elbow, he asked whether we would have the animal dismembered *à la Chinoise*, *à la Turque*, or *à la Tartare*. Unprovided with any reason for preferring any one of these modes to the other two, we left it to Samdadchiemba to obey the impulse of his genius in the matter. In a minute he had skinned and gutted the animal, and he then cut away the flesh from the bones, in one piece, without separating the limbs, so as to leave suspended from the tree merely the skeleton of the deer. This, it appeared, was the Turkish fashion, in use upon long journeys, in order to relieve travellers from the useless burden of bones.

This operation completed, Samdadchiemba cut some

slices of venison and proceeded to fry them in mutton fat, a manner of preparing venison not perhaps in strict accordance with the rules of the culinary art; but the difficulty of the circumstances did not allow us to do better. Our banquet was soon ready, but, contrary to our expectations, we were not the first to taste it; we had seated ourselves triangularly on the grass, having in the midst the lid of the pot, which served us as a dish, when all of a sudden we heard, as it were, the rushing of a storm over our heads; a great eagle dashed, like a lightning stroke, upon our entertainment, and immediately rose with equal rapidity, bearing off in each claw a large slice of venison. Upon recovering from our fright at this sudden incident, we ourselves were fain to laugh at the ludicrous aspect of the matter, but Samdadchiemba did not laugh by any means; he was in a paroxysm of fury, not indeed at the loss of the venison, but because the eagle, in its flight, had insolently dealt him a sound box on the ear with the extremity of its great wings.

A Rarity: Tartar Farmers!

After several days' journey we quitted the country of the Eight Banners and entered Western Toumet. At the time of the conquest of China by the Manchus, the king of Toumet, having distinguished himself in the expedition as an auxiliary of the invaders, the conqueror, in order to evince his gratitude for the services which the prince had rendered him, gave him the fine districts situated north of Peking, beyond the Great Wall. From that period they have borne the name of Eastern Toumet, and Old Toumet took that of Western Toumet; the two Toumets are separated from each other by the Tchakar River.

The Mongol Tartars of Western Toumet do not lead the pastoral and nomadic life; they cultivate their lands and apply themselves to the arts of civilized nations. We had been

for nearly a month traversing the desert, setting up our tent for the night in the first convenient place we found, and accustomed to see nothing but above us the sky, and below and around us interminable prairies. We had long, as it were, broken with the world, for all we had seen of mankind had been a few Tartar horsemen dashing across the Land of Grass, like so many birds of passage. Without our suspecting it, our tastes had insensibly become modified, and the desert of Mongolia had created in us a temperament friendly to the tranquillity of solitude. When, therefore, we found ourselves amid the cultivation, the movement, the bustle, the confusion of civilized existence, we felt, as it were, oppressed, suffocated; we seemed gasping for breath, and as though every moment we were going to be stifled. This impression, however, was evanescent; and we soon got to think that, after all, it was more comfortable and more agreeable after a day's march to take up our abode in a warm, well-stored inn than to have to set up a tent, to collect fuel, and to prepare our own very meagre repast before we could take our rest.

The inhabitants of Western Toumet, as may well be imagined, have completely lost the stamp of their original Mongol character; they have all become, more or less, Chinese; many of them do not even know a word of the Mongol language. Some, indeed, do not scruple to express contempt for their brothers of the desert, who refuse to subject their prairies to the ploughshare; they say, how ridiculous is it for men to be always vagabondizing about, and to have merely wretched tents wherein to shelter their heads, when they might so easily build houses, and obtain wealth and comforts of all kinds from the land beneath their feet. And, indeed, the Western Toumetians are perfectly right in preferring the occupation of agriculturist to that of shepherd, for they have magnificent plains, well watered, fertile, and

favourable to the production of all kinds of grain crops. When we passed through the country, harvest was over; but the great stacks of corn that we saw in all directions told us that the produce had been abundant and fine. Everything throughout Western Toumet bears the impress of affluence; nowhere, go in what direction you may, do you see the wretched tumble-down houses that disfigure the highways



TARTAR AGRICULTURIST.

and by-ways of China; nowhere do you see the miserable, half-starved, half-clothed creatures that pain the hearts of travellers in every other country: all the peasants here are well fed, well lodged, and well clothed. All the villages and roads are beautified with groups and avenues of fine trees; whereas in the other Tartar regions, cultivated by the Chinese, no trees are to be seen; trees are not even planted, for everybody knows they would be pulled up next day by some miserable pauper or other for fuel.

The Blue Town. Manchu Lack of Originality. Their Skill in Archery.

We had made three days' journey through the cultivated lands of the Toumet when we entered Koukou-Hote (Blue Town), called in Chinese Kou-Hoa-Tchen. There are two towns of the same name, five *lis* distant from one another. The people distinguish them by calling the one "Old Town" and the other "New Town," or "Commercial Town" and "Military Town." We first entered the latter, which was built by the Emperor Khang-Hi, to defend the empire against its northern enemies. The town has a beautiful, noble appearance, which might be admired in Europe itself. We refer, however, only to its circuit of embattled walls, made of brick; for inside, the low houses, built in the Chinese style, are little in unison with the lofty, huge ramparts that surround them. The interior of the town offers nothing remarkable but its regularity and a large and beautiful street, which runs through it from east to west. A *Kiang-Kiun*, or military commandant, resides here with ten thousand soldiers, who are drilled every day; so that the town may be regarded as a garrison town.

The soldiers of the New Town of Koukou-Khoton are Manchu Tartars; but if you did not previously know the fact, you would scarcely suspect it from hearing them speak. Amongst them there is perhaps not a single man who understands the language of his own country. Already two ages have passed away since the Manchus made themselves masters of the vast empire of China, and you would say that during these two centuries they have been unceasingly working out their own annihilation. Their manners, their language, their very country — all has become Chinese. It may now be affirmed that Manchu nationality has become irremediably annihilated.

Yet, amid the general transformation, there are still a

few tribes, such as the Si-Po and the Solon, which faithfully retain the Manchu type. Up to the present day their territories have been invaded neither by the Chinese nor by



CHINESE SOLDIER.

cultivation; they continue to dwell in tents and to furnish soldiers to the imperial armies.

The Manchus are excellent archers, and among them the tribe Solon are particularly eminent in this aspect. At all the military stations trials of skill with the bow take place on certain periodical occasions, in presence of the mandarins and of the assembled people. Three straw men, of the size of life, are placed in a straight line, at from twenty to thirty paces'

distance from one another; the archer is on a line with them, about fifteen feet off from the first figure, his bow bent and his finger on the string. The signal being given, he puts his horse to a gallop and discharges his arrow at the first figure; without checking his horse's speed he takes a second arrow from his quiver, places it in the bow, and discharges it against the second figure, and so with the third; all this while the horse is dashing at full speed along the line of the figures, so that the rider has to keep himself firm in the stirrups while he manœuvres with the promptitude necessary to avoid the getting beyond his mark. From the first figure to the second the archer has bare time for drawing his arrow, fixing, and discharging it, so that when he shoots, he has generally to turn somewhat on his saddle; and as to the third shot, he has to discharge it altogether in the old Parthian fashion. Yet for a competitor to be deemed a good archer, it is essential that he should fire an arrow into every one of the three figures. "To know how to shoot an arrow," writes a Manchu author, "is the first and most important knowledge for a Tartar to acquire. Though success therein seems an easy matter, success is of rare occurrence. How many are there who practise day and night! How many are there who sleep with the bow in their arms! and yet how few are there who have rendered themselves famous! How few are there whose names are proclaimed at the matches! Keep your frame straight and firm; avoid vicious postures; let your shoulders be immovable. Fire every arrow into its mark, and you may be satisfied with your skill."

Appearance of the Old Blue Town.

From the Manchu town to the Old Blue Town is not more than half an hour's walk, along a broad road, constructed through the large market, which narrowed the town. With the exception of the lamaseries, which rise above the

other buildings, you see before you merely an immense mass of houses and shops huddled confusedly together, without any order or arrangement whatever. The ramparts of the old town still exist in all their integrity, but the increase of the population has compelled the people by degrees to pass this barrier. Houses have risen outside the walls one after another until large suburbs have been formed, and now the extra-mural city is larger than the city proper.

We entered the city by a broad street, which exhibited nothing remarkable except the large lamasery, called, in common with the more celebrated establishment in the province of Chan-Si, the Lamasery of the Five Towers. It derives this appellation from a handsome square tower with five turrets, one, very lofty, in the centre and one at each angle.

Just beyond this the broad street terminated, and there was no exit but a narrow lane running right and left. We turned down what seemed the least dirty of these, but soon found ourselves in a liquid slough of mud and filth, black and of suffocating stench—we had got into the Street of the Tanners. We advanced slowly and shudderingly, for beneath the mire lay hid, now a great stone over which we stumbled, now a hole into which we sank. To complete our misfortune, we all at once heard before us deafening cries and shouts, indicating that, along the tortuosities of the lane in which we were, horsemen and carts were about to meet us. To draw back or to stand aside was equally impossible, so that our only resource was to bawl on our own account, and, advancing, take our chance. At the next turning we met the cavalcade, and something extremely disagreeable seemed threatening us, when, upon sight of our camels, the horses of the other party took fright and, turning right round, galloped off in utter confusion, leaving the way clear before us. Thus, thanks to our beasts of burden, we were enabled

to continue our journey without giving the way to anyone, and we at last arrived without any serious accident in a spacious street, adorned on each side with fine shops.

The Obliging Chinaman.

We looked about for an inn, but fruitlessly; we saw several inns, indeed, but these were not of the kind we sought. In the great towns of northern China and Tartary each inn is devoted to a particular class of travellers and will receive no other. "The Corn-dealers' Arms" inn, for example, will not admit a horse-dealer, and so on. The inns which devote themselves to the entertainment of mere travellers are called the taverns of the Transitory Guests. We were pausing, anxiously looking about for one of these, when a young man, hastening from an adjacent shop, came up to us. "You seek an inn, gentlemen travellers," said he; "suffer me to guide you to one; yet I scarcely know one in the Blue City worthy of you. Men are innumerable here, my Lords Lamas; a few good, but, alas! most bad. I speak it from my heart. In the Blue City you would with difficulty find one man who is guided by his conscience; yet conscience is a treasure! You Tartars, you, indeed, know well what conscience is. Ah! I know the Tartars well! excellent people, right-hearted souls! We Chinese are altogether different — rascals, rogues. Not one Chinaman in ten thousand heeds conscience. Here, in this Blue City, everybody, with the merest exceptions, makes it his business to cheat the worthy Tartars and rob them of their goods. Oh! it's shameful! "

And the excellent creature threw up his eyes as he denounced the knavery of his townsmen. We saw very clearly, however, that the direction taken by the eyes thus thrown up was the camel's back, whereon were two large cases, which our disinterested adviser no doubt took to contain precious merchandise. However, we let him lead us on and chatter

as he pleased. When we had been wandering about under his escort for a full hour and yet had reached no inn, we said to him: "We cannot think of troubling you further, since you yourself seem not to know where we may find that which we need." "Be perfectly easy, my lords," replied he; "I am guiding you to an excellent, a superexcellent hotel. Don't mention a word as to troubling me; you pain me by the idea. What! are we not all brothers? Away with the distinction between Tartar and Chinese! True, the language is not the same, nor the dress; but men have but one heart, one conscience, one invariable rule of justice. Just wait one moment for me, my lords; I will be with you again before you can look round," and so saying he dived into a shop on the left. He was soon back with us, making a thousand apologies for having detained us. "You must be very tired, my lords; one cannot be otherwise when one is travelling. 'Tis quite different from being with one's own family." As he spoke, we were accosted by another Chinese, a ludicrous contrast with our first friend, whose round, shining, smiling face was perfectly intense in its aspect of benevolence. The other fellow was meagre and lanky, with thin, pinched lips and little black eyes, half buried in the head, that gave to the whole physiognomy a character of the most thorough knavery. "My Lords Lamas," said he, "I see you have just arrived! Excellent! And you have journeyed safely. Well, well! Your camels are magnificent; 'tis no wonder you travel fast and securely upon such animals. Well, you have arrived: that's a great happiness. Se-Eul," he continued, addressing the Chinese who had first got hold of us, "you are guiding these noble Tartars to an hotel. 'Tis well! Take care that the hotel is a good one, worthy of the distinguished strangers. What think you of the 'Tavern of Eternal Equity'?" "The very hotel whither I was leading the Lords Lamas." "There is none better in the empire. By the way, the host is an acquaintance of mine. I cannot do better than accompany you and recommend these

noble Tartars to his best care. In fact, if I were not to go with you, I should have a weight upon my heart. When we are fortunate enough to meet brothers who need our aid, how can we do too much for them, for we are all brothers? My lords, you see this young man and myself; well, we two are clerks in the same establishment, and we make it our pride to serve our brothers the Tartars; for, alas! in this dreadful city there is but too little virtue."

A Turkish Hostelry. The Inn of the Three Perfections.

Anyone hearing their professions of devoted zeal would have imagined these two personages to have been the friends of our childhood; but we were sufficiently acquainted with Chinese manners to perceive at once that we were the mark of a couple of swindlers. Accordingly, when we saw inscribed on a door, "Hotel of the Three Perfections; transitory guests on horse and camel entertained, and their affairs transacted with infallible success," we at once directed our course up the gateway, despite the vehement remonstrances of our worthy guides, and rode down a long avenue to the great square court of the hotel. The little blue cap worn by the attendants indicated that we were in a Turkish establishment.

This proceeding of ours was not at all what the two Chinese desired; but they still followed us, and, without appearing disconcerted, continued to act their parts. "Where are the people of the hotel?" cried they, with an immense air; "let them prepare a large apartment, a fine, clean apartment. Their Excellencies have arrived, and must be suitably accommodated." One of the principal waiters presented himself, holding by his teeth a key, in one hand a broom, and in the other a watering-pot. Our two protectors immediately took possession of these articles. "Leave everything to us," said they; "it is we who claim the honour of personally waiting upon our illustrious friends; you, attendants of the hotel, you only do things by halves, actuated as you are merely by

mercenary considerations." And thereupon they set to work sprinkling, sweeping, and cleaning the room to which the waiter guided us. When this operation was concluded, we seated ourselves on the *kang*; the two Chinese "knew themselves better than to sit by the side of our Eminent Distinctions," and they accordingly squatted on the floor. As tea was being served, a young man, well attired and of exceedingly elegant address, came into the room, carrying by the four corners a silk handkerchief. "Gentlemen Lamas," said the elder of our previous companions, "this young man is the son of our principal, and doubtless has been sent by his father to inquire after your health, and whether you have so far journeyed in peace." The young man placed his handkerchief upon the table that stood before us. "Here are some cakes my father has sent to be eaten with your tea. When you have finished that meal, he entreats you will come and partake of an humble repast in our poor dwelling." "But why wear your hearts out thus for us mere strangers?" "Oh!" exclaimed all three in chorus, "the words you utter cover us with blushes! What! can we do anything in excess for brothers who have thus honoured us with their presence in our poor city?"

"Poor Tartars!" said I in French to my colleague, "how thoroughly eaten up they must be when they fall into such hands as these!" These words, in an unknown tongue, excited considerable surprise in our worthy friends. "In which of the illustrious kingdoms of Tartary dwell your Excellencies?" asked one of them. "We are not Tartars at all," was the reply. "Ah! we saw that at once; the Tartars have no such majesty of aspect as yours; their mien has no grandeur about it! May we ask what is the noble country whence you come?" "We are from the West; our native land is far hence." "Quite so," replied the eldest of the three knaves. "I knew it, and I said so to these young men, but they are

ignorant; they know nothing about physiognomy. Ah! you are from the West. I know your country well; I have been there more than once." "We are delighted to hear this: doubtless, then, you are acquainted with our language?" "Why, I cannot say I know it thoroughly; but there are some few words I understand. I can't speak them, indeed; but that does not matter. You Western people are so clever, you know everything, the Chinese language, the Tartarian, the Western — you can speak them all. I have always been closely mixed up with your countrymen and have invariably been selected to manage their affairs for them whenever they come to the Blue Town. It is always I who make their purchases for them."

We had by this time finished our tea; our three friends rose, and, with a simultaneous bow, invited us to accompany them. "My lords, the repast is by this time prepared, and our chief awaits you." "Listen," said we, gravely, "while we utter words full of reason. You have taken the trouble to guide us to an inn, which shows you to be men of warm hearts; you have here swept for us and prepared our room; again, in proof of your excellent dispositions, your master has sent us pastry, which manifests in him a benevolence incapable of exhaustion towards the wayfaring stranger. You now invite us to go and dine with you: we cannot possibly trespass so grossly upon your kindness. No, dear friends, you must excuse us; if we desire to make some purchases in your establishment, you may rely upon us. For the present we will not detain you. We are going to dine at the Turkish eating-house." So saying, we rose and ushered our excellent friends to the door.

Spoilation of the Mongols by the Chinese.

The commercial intercourse between the Tartars and the Chinese is revoltingly iniquitous on the part of the latter.

So soon as Mongols, simple, ingenuous men if such there be at all in the world, arrive in a trading town, they are snapped up by some Chinese, who carry them off, as it were, by main force, to their houses, give them tea for themselves and forage for their animals, and cajole them in every conceivable way. The Mongols, themselves without guile and incapable of conceiving guile in others, take all they hear to be perfectly genuine, and congratulate themselves, conscious as they are of their inaptitude for business, upon their good fortune in thus meeting with brothers — *Ahatou*, as they say — in whom they can place full confidence and who will undertake to manage their whole business for them. A good dinner provided gratis in the back shop completes the illusion. "If these people wanted to rob me," says the Tartar to himself, "they would not go to all this expense in giving me a dinner for nothing." When once the Chinese has got hold of the Tartar, he employs over him all the resources of the skilful and utterly unprincipled knavery of the Chinese character. He keeps him in his house, eating, drinking, and smoking, one day after another, until his subordinates have sold all the poor man's cattle, or whatever else he has to sell, and bought for him, in return, the commodities he requires, at prices double and triple the market value. But so plausible is the Chinese and so simple is the Tartar that the latter invariably departs with the most entire conviction of the immense philanthropy of the former, and with a promise to return, when he has other goods to sell, to the establishment where he has been treated so fraternally.

The Money-Changer Confounded.

The next morning we went out to purchase some winter clothing, the want of which began to make itself sensibly felt. But first, in order to facilitate our dealings, we had to sell some ounces of silver. The money of the Chinese con-

sists entirely of small round copper coins, of the size of our halfpenny, with a square hole in the centre, through which the people string them, so that they may be more conveniently carried. These coins the Chinese call *tsien*, the Tartars *dehos*, and the Europeans *sapeks*. Gold and silver are not coined at all; they are melted into ingots of various sizes, and thus put into circulation. Gold-dust and gold-leaf are also current in commerce, and they also possess bank-notes. The ordinary value of the ounce of silver is seventeen or eighteen hundred sapeks, according to the scarcity or abundance of silver in the country.

The money-changers have two irregular modes of making a profit by their traffic: if they state the fair price of silver to the customer, they cheat him in the weight; if their scales and their method of weighing are accurate, they diminish the price of the silver accordingly. But when they have to do with Tartars, they employ neither of these methods of fraud; on the contrary, they weigh the silver scrupulously, and sometimes allow a little overweight, and even they pay them above the market price; in fact, they appear to be quite losers by the transaction, and so they would be if the weight and the price of the silver alone were considered; their advantage is derived, in these cases, from their manner of calculating the amount. When they come to reduce the silver into sapeks, they do indeed reduce it, making the most flagrant miscalculations, which the Tartars, who can count nothing beyond their beads, are quite incapable of detecting, and which they, accordingly, adopt implicitly, and even with satisfaction, always considering they have sold their bullion well, since they know the full weight has been allowed and that the full market price has been given.

At the money-changers' in the Blue Town to which we went to sell some silver, the Chinese dealers essayed, according to custom, to apply this fraud to us, but they were

disconcerted. The weight shown by their scales was perfectly correct, and the price they offered us was rather above the ordinary course of exchange, and the bargain between us was so far concluded. The chief clerk took the *souan-pan*, the calculation table used by the Chinese, and, after calculating with an appearance of intense nicety, announced the result of his operation. "This is an exchange-office," said we; "you are the buyers, we the sellers; you have made your calculation, we will make ours: give us a pencil and a piece of paper." — "Nothing can be more just; you have enunciated a fundamental law of commerce," and, so saying, they handed us a writing-case. We took the pencil, and a very short calculation exhibited a difference in our favour of a thousand sapeks. "Superintendent of the bank," said we, "your *souan-pan* is in error by a thousand sapeks." — "Impossible! Do you think that all of a sudden I've forgotten my *souan-pan*? Let me go over it again "; and he proceeded with an air of great anxiety to appear correct, to set his calculating machine once more in operation, the other customers by our side looking on with great amazement at all this. When he had done, "Yes," said he, "I knew I was right; see, brother "; and he passed the machine to a colleague behind the counter, who went over his calculation; the result of their operations was exactly the same to a fraction. "You see," said the principal, "there is no error. How is it that our calculation does not agree with that which you have written down there? " — "It is unimportant to inquire why your calculation does not agree with ours; this is certain, that your calculation is wrong and ours right. You see these little characters that we have traced on this paper; they are a very different thing from your *souan-pan*; it is impossible for them to be wrong. Were all the calculators in the world to work the whole of their lives upon this operation, they could arrive at no other result than this: that your statement is wrong by a thousand sapeks."

The money-changers were extremely embarrassed and began to turn very red, when a bystander, who perceived that the affair was assuming an awkward aspect, presented himself as umpire. "I'll reckon it up for you," said he. He took the *souan-pan*, and his calculation agreed with ours. The superintendent of the bank hereupon made us a profound bow. "Sirs Lamas," said he, "your mathematics are better than mine." "Oh, not at all," replied we, with a bow equally profound; "your *souan-pan* is excellent, but who ever heard of a calculator always exempt from error? People like you may very well be mistaken once and away, whereas poor simple folks like us make blunders ten thousand times. Now, however, we have fortunately concurred in our reckoning, thanks to the pains you have taken." These phrases were rigorously required, under the circumstances, by Chinese politeness. Whenever any person in China is compromised by any awkward incident, those present always carefully refrain from any observation which may make him blush, or, as the Chinese phrase it, take away his face.

After our conciliatory address had restored self-possession to all present, everybody drew round the piece of paper on which we had cast up our sum in Arabic numerals. "That is a fine *souan-pan*," said one to another; "simple, sure, and speedy." — "Sirs Lamas," asked the principal, "what do these characters mean? What *souan-pan* is this?" "This *souan-pan* is infallible," returned we; "the characters are those which the Mandarins of Celestial Literature use in calculating eclipses and the course of the seasons."¹ After a brief conversation on the merits of the Arabic numerals the cashier handed us the full amount of sapeks, and we parted good friends.

¹ The Fathers Jesuits introduced the use of Arabic numerals into the Observatory at Peking.

The Old-Clothes-Dealer.

Upon receiving our sapeks we proceeded to buy the winter clothing we needed. Upon a consideration of the meagreness of our exchequer we came to the resolution that it would be better to purchase what we required at some second-hand shop. In China and Tartary no one has the smallest repugnance to wear other people's clothes; he who has not himself the attire wherein to pay a visit or make a holiday goes without ceremony to a neighbour and borrows a hat or a pair of trousers or boots or shoes or whatever else he wants, and nobody is at all surprised at these borrowings, which are quite a custom. The only hesitation anyone has in lending his clothes to a neighbour is lest the borrower should sell them in payment of some debt, or, after using them, pawn them. People who buy clothes buy them indifferently, new or second-hand. The question of price is alone taken into consideration, for there is no more delicacy felt about putting on another man's hat or trousers than there is about living in a house that someone else has occupied before you.

This custom of wearing other people's things was by no means to our taste, and all the less so, that, ever since our arrival at the mission of Si-Wang, we had not been under the necessity of departing from our old habits in this respect. Now, however, the slenderness of our purse compelled us to waive our repugnance. We went out, therefore, in search of a second-hand clothes shop, of which, in every town here, there are a greater or less number, for the most part in connexion with pawnshops, called in these countries *Tang-Pow*. Those who borrow upon pledges are seldom able to redeem the articles they have deposited, which they accordingly leave to die, as the Tartars and Chinese express it; or, in other words, they allow the period of redemption to pass, and the articles pass altogether from them. The old-clothes shops of

the Blue Town were filled in this way with Tartar spoils, so that we had the opportunity of selecting exactly the sort of things we required to suit the new costume we had adopted.

At the first shop we visited they showed us a quantity of wretched garments turned up with sheepskin; but, though these rags were exceedingly old, and so covered with grease that it was impossible to guess at their original colour, the price asked for them was exorbitant. After a protracted haggling we found it impossible to come to terms and we gave up this first attempt; and we gave it up, be it added, with a certain degree of satisfaction, for our self-respect was somewhat wounded at finding ourselves reduced even to the proposition of wearing such filthy rags. We visited another shop, and another, a third, and a fourth, and still several more. We were shown magnificent garments, handsome garments, fair garments, endurable garments, but the consideration of expense was, in each instance, an impracticable stumbling-block. The journey we had undertaken might endure for several years, and extreme economy, at all events in the outset, was indispensable. After going about the whole day, after making the acquaintance of all the rag-merchants in the Blue Town, after turning over and over all their old clothes, we were fain to return to the second-hand dealer whom we had first visited, and to make the best bargain we could with him. We purchased from him, at last, two ancient robes of sheepskin, covered with some material the nature of which it was impossible to identify, and the original colour of which we suspected to have been yellow. We proceeded to try them on, and it was at once evident that the tailor in making them had by no means had us in his eye. M. Gabet's robe was too short, M. Huc's too long; but a friendly exchange was impracticable, the difference in height between the two missionaries being altogether too disproportionate. We at first thought of cutting the excess from the one, in order to make up the

deficiency of the other; but then we should have had to call in the aid of a tailor, and this would have involved another drain upon our purse; the pecuniary consideration decided the question, and we determined to wear the clothes as they were, M. Huc adopting the expedient of holding up, by means of a girdle, the surplus of his robe, and M. Gabet resigning himself to the exposure to the public gaze of a portion of his legs; the main inconvenience, after all, being the manifestation to all who saw us that we could not attire ourselves in exact proportion to our size.

Provided with our sheepskin coats, we next asked the dealer to show us his collection of second-hand winter hats. We examined several of these, and at last selected two caps of fox-skin, the elegant form of which reminded us of the shakos of our sappers. These purchases completed, each of us put under his arm his packet of old clothes, and we returned to the Hotel of the Three Perfections.

We remained two days longer at Koukou-Khoton; for, besides that we needed repose, we were glad of the opportunity of seeing this great town and of becoming acquainted with the numerous and celebrated lamaseries established there.

The Camel Market.

The Blue Town enjoys considerable commercial importance, which it has acquired chiefly through its lamaseries, the reputation of which attracts thither Mongols from the most distant parts of the empire. The Mongols bring hither large herds of oxen, camels, horses, sheep, and loads of furs, mushrooms, and salt, the only produce of the deserts of Tartary. They receive, in return, brick-tea, linen, saddlery, odoriferous sticks to burn before their idols, oatmeal, millet, and kitchen utensils.

The Blue Town is especially noted for its great trade

in camels. The camel market is a large square in the centre of the town; the animals are ranged here in long rows, their front feet raised upon a mud elevation constructed for that purpose, the object being to show off the size and height of the creatures. It is impossible to describe the uproar and confusion of this market, what with the incessant bawling of the buyers and sellers as they dispute, their noisy chattering after they have agreed, and the horrible shrieking of the camels at having their noses pulled, for the purpose of making them show their agility in kneeling and rising. In order to test the strength of the camel, and the burden it is capable of bearing, they make it kneel, and then pile one thing after another upon its back, causing it to rise under each addition, until it can rise no longer. They sometimes use the following expedient: while the camel is kneeling, a man gets upon its hind heels and holds on by the long hair of its hump; if the camel can rise then, it is considered an animal of superior power.

The trade in camels is entirely conducted by proxy: the seller and the buyer never settle the matter between themselves. They select indifferent persons to sell their goods, who propose, discuss, and fix the price; the one looking to the interests of the seller, the other to those of the purchaser. These "sale-speakers" exercise no other trade; they go from market to market to promote business, as they say. They have generally a great knowledge of cattle, have much fluency of tongue, and are, above all, endowed with a knavery beyond all shame. They dispute, by turns furiously and argumentatively, as to the merits and defects of the animal; but as soon as it comes to a question of price, the tongue is laid aside as a medium, and the conversation proceeds altogether in signs. They seize each other by the wrist, and beneath the long, wide sleeve of their jackets indicate with their fingers the progress of the bargain. After the affair is concluded, they partake of the dinner, which is always given by the purchaser,

and then receive a certain number of sapeks, according to the custom of different places.

Domestic Lamas. Wandering Lamas. Lamas in Community.

The lamas who flock from all the districts of Tartary to the lamaseries of the Blue Town rarely remain there permanently. After taking their degrees, as it were, in these



VAGABOND LAMAS.

quasi-universities, they return, one class of them, to their own countries, where they either settle in the small lamaseries, wherein they can be more independent, or live at home with their families, retaining of their order little more than its red and yellow habit.

Another class consists of those lamas who live neither in lamaseries nor at home with their families, but spend their time vagabondizing about like birds of passage, travelling all over their own and the adjacent countries and subsisting upon the rude hospitality which in lamasery and in

tent they are sure to receive throughout their wandering way. Lamasery or tent they enter without ceremony, seat themselves, and, while the tea is preparing for their refreshment, give their hosts an account of the places they have visited in their rambles. If they think fit to sleep where they are, they stretch themselves on the floor and repose until the morning. After breakfast they stand at the entrance of the tent and watch the clouds for a while and see whence the wind blows; then they take their way, no matter whither, by this path or that, east or west, north or south, as their fancy or a smoother turf suggests, and lounge tranquilly on, sure at least, if no other shelter presents itself by and by, of the shelter of the cover, as they express it, of that great tent the world; and sure, moreover, having no destination before them, never to lose their way.

The wandering lamas visit all the countries readily accessible to them — China, Manchuria, the Khalkhas, the various kingdoms of southern Mongolia, the Ourianghai, the Koukou-Noor, the northern and southern slopes of the Celestial Mountains, Thibet, India, and sometimes even Turkestan. There is no stream which they have not crossed, no mountains they have not climbed, no Grand Lama before whom they have not prostrated themselves, no people with whom they have not associated and whose customs and language are unknown to them. Travelling without any end in view, the places they reach are always those they sought.

The lamas living in community are those who compose the third class. A lamasery is a collection of small houses built around one or more Buddhist temples. These dwellings are more or less large and beautiful, according to the means of the proprietor. The lamas who live thus in community are generally more regular than the others; they pay more attention to prayer and study. They are allowed to keep a few animals: some cows to afford them milk and butter, the

principal materials of their daily food; horses; and some sheep to be killed on festivals.

China Disturbed by the Mongol Awakening.

It is said that the policy of the Manchu dynasty is to increase the number of lamas in Tartary; the Chinese mandarins so assured us, and the thing seems probable enough. It is certain that the government of Peking, whilst it leaves to poverty and want the Chinese bonzes, honours and favours lamaism in a special degree. The secret intention of the government in augmenting the number of the lamas, who are bound to celibacy, is to arrest by this means the progress of the population in Tartary. The recollection of the former power of the Mongols ever fills its mind; it knows that they were formerly masters of the empire — and in the fear of a new invasion it seeks to enfeeble them by all the means in its power. Yet, although Mongolia is scantily peopled in comparison with its immense extent, it could at a day's notice send forth a formidable army. A high lama, the Guison-Tamba, for instance, would have but to raise his finger, and all the Mongols, from the frontiers of Siberia to the extremities of Thibet, rising as one man, would precipitate themselves like a torrent wherever their sainted leader might direct them. The profound peace which they have enjoyed for more than two centuries might seem to have necessarily enervated their warlike character; nevertheless, you may still observe that they have not altogether lost their taste for warlike adventures. The great campaigns of Jenghiz Khan, who led them to the conquest of the world, have not escaped their memory during the long period of leisure of their nomadic life; they love to talk of them and to feed their imagination with vague projects of invasion.



CHAPTER V

WE quitted the Blue Town on the fourth day of the ninth moon. We had already been travelling more than a month. It was with the utmost difficulty that our little caravan could get out of the town. The streets were encumbered with men, cars, animals, stalls in which the traders displayed their goods; we could only advance step by step, and at times we were obliged to come to a halt and wait for some minutes until the way became a little cleared. It was near noon before we reached the last houses of the town, outside the western gate. There, upon a level road, our camels were at length able to proceed at their ease in all the fullness of their long step. A chain of rugged rocks rising on our right sheltered us so completely from the north wind that we did not at all feel the rigour of the weather. The country through which we were now travelling was still a portion of Western Toumet. We observed in all directions the same indications of prosperity and comfort which had so much gratified us east of the town. Everywhere around, substantial villages presented proofs of successful agriculture and trade. Although we could not set up our tent in the cultivated fields by which we were now surrounded, yet, so far as circumstances permitted, we adhered to our Tartar habits. Instead of entering an inn to take our morning meal, we seated ourselves under a rock or tree and there breakfasted upon some rolls fried in oil, of which we had bought a supply at the Blue Town. The passers-by laughed at this rustic proceeding, but they were not surprised at it. Tartars, unused to the manners of civilized nations, are entitled to take their repast by the road-side even in places where inns abound.

During the day this mode of travelling was pleasant and convenient enough, but, as it would not have been prudent to remain out all night, at sunset we sought an inn: the preservation of our animals of itself sufficed to render this proceeding necessary. There was nothing for them to eat on the way-side, and had we not resorted in the evening to places where we could purchase forage for them, they would, of course, have speedily died.

On the second evening after our departure from Blue Town we encountered at an inn a very singular personage. We had just tied our animals to a manger under a shed in the great court when a traveller made his appearance, leading by a halter a lean, raw-boned horse. The traveller was short, but then his rotundity was prodigious. He wore on his head a great straw hat, the flapping brim of which rested on his shoulders; a long sabre suspended from his girdle presented an amusing contrast with the peaceful joyousness of his physiognomy. "Superintendent of the soup-kettle," cried he, as he entered, "is there room for me in your tavern?" "I have but one travellers' room," answered the innkeeper, "and three Mongols who have just come occupy it; you can ask them if they will make room for you." The traveller waddled towards us. "Peace and happiness unto you, Sirs Lamas; do you need the whole of your room, or can you accommodate me?" "Why not? We are all travellers and should serve one another." "Words of excellence! You are Tartars; I am Chinese, yet, comprehending the claims of hospitality, you act upon the truth that all men are brothers." Hereupon, fastening his horse to a manger, he joined us, and, having deposited his travelling-bag upon the *kang*, stretched himself at full length, with the air of a man greatly fatigued. "Whither are you bound?" asked we; "are you going to buy up salt or ketchup for some Chinese company?" "No; I represent a great commercial house at Peking, and I am col-

lecting some debts from the Tartars. Where are you going? ” “ We shall today pass the Yellow River to Tchagan-Kouren, and then journey westward through the country of the Ortous.” “ You are not Mongols, apparently? ” “ No; we are from the West.” “ Well, it seems we are both of one trade; you, like myself, are Tartar-eaters.” “ Tartar-eaters! What do you mean? ” “ Why, we eat the Tartars. You eat them by prayers; I by commerce. And why not? The Mongols are poor simpletons, and we may as well get their money as anybody else.” “ You are mistaken. Since we entered Tartary, we have spent a great deal, but we have never taken a single sapek from the Tartars.” “ Oh, nonsense! ” “ What! do you suppose our camels and our baggage came to us from the Mongols? ” “ Why, I thought you came here to recite your prayers.” We entered into some explanation of the difference between our principles and those of the lamas, for whom the traveller had mistaken us, and he was altogether amazed at our disinterestedness. “ Things are quite the other way here,” said he. “ You won’t get a lama to say prayers for nothing; and certainly, as for me, I should never set foot in Tartary but for the sake of money.” “ But how is it you manage to make such good meals of the Tartars? ” “ Oh, we devour them; we pick them clean. You’ve observed the silly race, no doubt; whatever they see when they come into our towns they want, and when we know who they are, and where we can find them, we let them have goods upon credit, of course at a considerable advance upon the price, and upon interest at thirty or forty per cent, which is quite right and necessary. In China the Emperor’s laws do not allow this; it is only done with the Tartars. Well, they don’t pay the money, and the interest goes on until there is a good sum owing worth the coming for. When we come for it, they’ve no money, so we merely take all the cattle and sheep and horses we can get hold of for the interest, and leave the

capital debt and future interest to be paid next time, and so it goes on from one generation to another. Oh! a Tartar debt is a complete gold mine."

Day had not broken when the *Yao-Tchang-Ti* (exactor of debts) was on foot. "Sirs Lamas," said he, "I am going to saddle my horse and proceed on my way — I propose to travel today with you." "'Tis a singular mode of travelling with people, to start before they're up," said we. "Oh, your camels go faster than my horse; you'll soon overtake me, and we shall enter Tchagan-Kouren (White Enclosure) together." He rode off, and at day-break we followed him.

Loss of Arsalan.

This was a black day with us, for in it we had to mourn a loss. After travelling several hours we perceived that Arsalan was not with the caravan. We halted, and Samdadchiemba, mounted on his little mule, turned back in search of the dog. He went through several villages which we had passed in the course of the morning, but his search was fruitless; he returned without having either seen or heard of Arsalan. "The dog was Chinese," said Samdadchiemba; "he was not used to a nomadic life, and getting tired of wandering about over the desert, he has taken service in the cultivated district. What is to be done? Shall we wait for him?" "No, it is late, and we are far from White Enclosure." "Well, if there is no dog, there is no dog, and we must do without him." This sentimental effusion of Samdadchiemba gravely delivered, we proceeded on our way.

At first the loss of Arsalan grieved us somewhat. We were accustomed to see him running to and fro in the prairie, rolling in the long grass, chasing the grey squirrels, and scaring the eagles from their seat on the plain. His incessant evolutions served to break the monotony of the country through which we were passing, and to abridge, in some degree, the

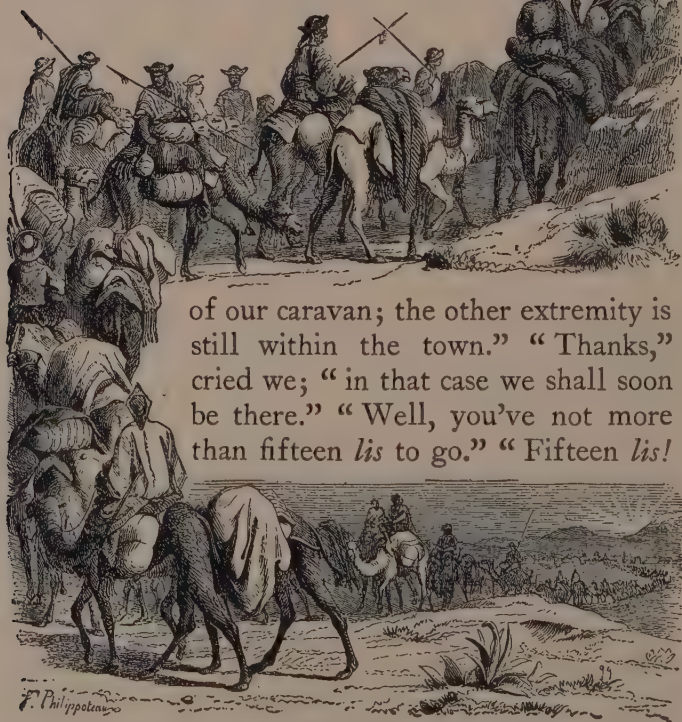
tedious length of the way. His office of porter gave him especial title to our regret. Yet, after the first impulses of sorrow, reflection told us that the loss was not altogether so serious as it had at first appeared. Each day's experience of the nomadic life had served more and more to dispel our original apprehension of robbers. Moreover, Arsalan, under any circumstances, would have been a very ineffective guard; for his incessant galloping about during the day sent him at night into a sleep which nothing could disturb. This was so much the case that every morning, make what noise we might in taking down our tent, loading the camels, and so on, there would Arsalan remain, stretched on the grass, sleeping a leaden sleep; and when the caravan was about to start, we had always to arouse him with a sound kick or two. Upon one occasion a strange dog made his way into our tent without the smallest opposition on the part of Arsalan, and had full time to devour our mess of oatmeal and a candle, the wick of which he left contumeliously on the outside of the tent. A consideration of economy completed our restoration to tranquillity of mind: each day we had had to provide Arsalan with a ration of meal, at least quite equal in quantity to that which each of us consumed; and we were not rich enough to have constantly seated at our table a guest with such excellent appetite, and whose services were wholly inadequate to compensate for the expense he occasioned.

Encounter with an Immense Turkish Caravan.

We had been informed that we should reach White Enclosure the same day, but the sun had set and as yet we saw no signs of the town before us. By and by what seemed clouds of dust made their appearance in the distance, approaching us. By degrees they developed themselves in the form of camels, laden with western merchandise for sale in Peking. When we met the first camel-driver, we asked him how far



it was from White Enclosure. "You see here," said he with a grin, "one end



of our caravan; the other extremity is still within the town." "Thanks," cried we; "in that case we shall soon be there." "Well, you've not more than fifteen *lis* to go." "Fifteen *lis*!

why you've just told us that the other end of your caravan is still in the town." "So it is, but our caravan consists of at least ten thousand camels." "If that be the case," said we, "there is no time to be lost: a good journey to you, and peace," and on we went.

The cameleers had stamped upon their features, almost blackened with the sun, a character of uncouth misanthropy. Enveloped from head to foot in goatskins, they were placed between the humps of their camels, just like bales of merchandise; they scarcely condescended to turn even their heads round to look at us. Five months' journeying across the desert seemed almost to have brutified them. All the camels of this immense caravan wore suspended from their necks Thibetian bells, the silvery sound of which produced a musical harmony which contrasted very agreeably with the sullen taciturn aspect of the drivers. In our progress, however, we contrived to make them break silence from time to time; the roguish Dchiahour attracted their attention to us in a very marked manner. Some of the camels, more timid than others, took fright at the little mule, which they doubtless imagined to be a wild beast. In their endeavour to escape in an opposite direction they drew after them the camels next following them in the procession, so that by this operation the caravan assumed the form of an immense bow. This abrupt evolution aroused the cameleers from their sullen torpidity; they grumbled bitterly and directed fierce glances against us as they exerted themselves to restore the procession to its proper line. Samdadchiemba, on the contrary, shouted with laughter; it was in vain that we told him to ride somewhat apart in order not to alarm the camels; he turned a deaf ear to all we said. The discomfiture of the procession was quite a delightful entertainment for him, and he made his little mule caracole about in the hope of an encore.

Inhospitable Inns.

The first cameleer had not deceived us. We journeyed on between the apparently interminable file of the caravan and a chain of rugged rocks until night had absolutely set in, and even then we did not see the town. The last camel had passed on, and we seemed alone in the desert, when a man came riding by on a donkey. "Elder brother," said we, "is White Enclosure still distant?" "No, brothers," he replied, "it is just before you, there, where you see the lights. You have not more than five *lis* to go." Five *lis*! It was a long way in the night, and upon a strange road, but we were fain to resign ourselves. The night grew darker and darker. There was no moon, no stars even, to guide us on our way. We seemed advancing amid chaos and abysses. We resolved to alight, in the hope of seeing our way somewhat more clearly. The result was precisely the reverse; we would advance a few steps gropingly and slowly; then, all of a sudden, we threw back our heads in fear of dashing them against rocks or walls that seemed to rise from an abyss. We speedily got covered with perspiration and were only happy to mount our camels once more and rely on their clearer sight and surer feet. Fortunately the baggage was well secured. What misery would it have been had that fallen off amid all this darkness, as it had frequently done before!

We arrived at last in Tchagan-Kouren, but the difficulty now was to find an inn. Every house was shut up, and there was not a living creature in the streets, except a number of great dogs that ran barking after us. At length, after wandering haphazard through several streets, we heard the strokes of a hammer upon an anvil. We proceeded towards the sound, and before long a great light, a thick smoke, and sparks glittering in the air announced that we had come upon a blacksmith's shop. We presented ourselves at the door and

humbly entreated our brothers the smiths to tell us where we should find an inn. After a few jests upon Tartars and camels the company assented to our request, and a boy, lighting a torch, came out to act as our guide to an inn.

After we had knocked and called for a long time at the door of the first inn we came to, the landlord opened it and was inquiring who we were when, unluckily for us, one of our camels, worried by a dog, took it into its head to send forth a succession of those horrible cries for which the animal is remarkable. The innkeeper at once shut his door in our faces. At all the inns where we successively applied we were received in much the same manner. No sooner were the camels noticed than the answer was "No room"; in point of fact, no innkeeper, if he can avoid it, will receive camels into his stables at all: their size occupies great space, and their appearance almost invariably creates alarm among the other animals; so that Chinese travellers generally make it a condition with the landlord before they enter an inn that no Tartar caravan shall be admitted. Our guide, finding all our efforts futile, got tired of accompanying us, wished us good-night, and returned to his forge.

Kindness of an Old Mongol Shepherd.

We were exhausted with weariness, hunger, and thirst, yet there seemed no remedy for the evil, when all at once we heard the bleating of sheep. Following the sound, we came to a mud enclosure, the door of which was at once opened upon our knocking. "Brother," said we, "is this an inn?" "No, it is a sheep-house. Who are you?" "We are travellers, who have arrived here weary and hungry; but no one will receive us." As we were speaking, an old man came to the door, holding in his hand a lighted torch. As soon as he saw our camels and our costume, "*Mendou! Mendou!*" he exclaimed, "Sirs Lamas, enter; there is room for your camels

in the court, and my house is large enough for you; you shall stay and rest here for several days." We entered joyfully, fastened our camels to the manger, and seated ourselves round the hearth, where already tea was prepared for us. "Brother," said we to the old man, "we need not ask whether it is to Mongols that we owe this hospitality." "Yes, Sirs Lamas," said he, "we are all Mongols here. We have for some time past quitted the tent, to reside here, so that we may better carry on our trade in sheep. Alas! we are insensibly becoming Chinese!" "Your manner of life," returned we, "may have changed, but it is certain that your hearts have remained Tartar. Nowhere else in all Tchagan-Kouren has the door of kindness been opened to us."

Observing our fatigue, the head of the family unrolled some skins in a corner of the room, and we gladly laid ourselves down to repose. We should have slept on till the morning, but Samdadchiemba aroused us to partake of the supper which our hosts had hospitably prepared — two large cups of tea, cakes baked in the ashes, and some chops of boiled mutton, arranged on a stool by way of a table. The meal seemed after our long fasting perfectly magnificent; we partook of it heartily, and then, having exchanged pinches of snuff with the family, resumed our slumber.

Flood of the Yellow River.

Next morning we communicated the plan of our journey to our Mongol hosts. No sooner had we mentioned that we intended to pass the Yellow River and thence traverse the country of the Ortous than the whole family burst out with exclamations. "It is quite impossible," said the old man, "to cross the Yellow River. Eight days ago the river overflowed its banks, and the plains on both sides are completely inundated." This intelligence filled us with the utmost consternation. We had been quite prepared to pass the Yellow River

under circumstances of danger arising from the wretchedness of the ferry-boats and the difficulty of managing our camels in them, and we knew, of course, that the Hoang-Ho was subject to periodical overflows; but these occur ordinarily in the rainy season, towards the sixth or seventh month, whereas we were now in the dry season, and, moreover, in a peculiarly dry season.

We proceeded forthwith towards the river to investigate the matter for ourselves, and found that the Tartar had only told us the exact truth. The Yellow River had become, as it were, a vast sea, the limits of which were scarcely visible. Here and there you could see the higher grounds rising above the water, like islands, while the houses and villages looked as though they were floating upon the waves. We consulted several persons as to the course we should adopt. Some said that further progress was impracticable, for that, even where the inundation had subsided, it had left the earth so soft and slippery that the camels could not walk upon it, while elsewhere we should have to dread at every step some deep pool, in which we should inevitably be drowned. Other opinions were more favourable, suggesting that the boats which were stationed at intervals for the purpose would easily and cheaply convey us and our baggage in three days to the river, while the camels could follow us through the water, and that once at the riverside, the great ferry-boat would carry us all over the bed of the stream without any difficulty.

Discussions. Severe Hardships.

Our worthy Tartar host, in his hospitality, sought to divert us from our project, but unsuccessfully; and he even got rallied by Samdadchiemba for his kindness. "It's quite clear," said our guide, "that you've become a mere Kitat (Chinese), and think that a man must not set out upon a journey unless the earth is perfectly dry and the sky perfectly

cloudless. I have no doubt you go out to lead your sheep with an umbrella in one hand and a fan in the other." It was ultimately arranged that we should take our departure at day-break next morning.

Meantime we went out into the town to make the necessary supply of provisions. To guard against the possibility of being inundation-bound for several days, we bought a quantity of small loaves fried in mutton fat, and for our animals we procured a quantity of the most portable forage we could find.

Next morning we departed full of confidence in the goodness of God. Our Tartar host, who insisted upon escorting us out of the town, led us to an elevation whence we could see in the distance a long line of thick vapour which seemed journeying from west to east; it marked the course of the Yellow River. "Where you see that vapour," said the old man, "you will find a great dike, which serves to keep the river in bounds, except upon any extraordinary rise of the waters. That dike is now dry; when you come to it, proceed along it until you reach the little pagoda you see yonder, on your right; there you will find a boat that will convey you across the river. Keep that pagoda in sight, and you can't lose your way." We cordially thanked the old man for the kindness he had shown us and proceeded on our journey.

We were soon up to the knees of the camels in a thick slimy compost of mud and water, covering other somewhat firmer mud over which the poor animals slowly slid on their painful way, their heads turning alternately right and left, their limbs trembling, and the sweat exuding from each pore. Every moment we expected them to fall beneath us.

It was near noon ere we arrived at a little village, not more than a couple of miles from the place where we had left the old man. Here a few wretched people, whose rags scarce covered their gaunt frames, came round us and accompanied

us to the edge of a broad piece of water, portion of a lake, which they told us, and which it was quite clear, we must pass before we could reach the dike indicated by the Tartar. Some boatmen proposed to carry us over this lake to the dike. We asked them how many sapeks they would charge for the service. — “Oh, very little; next to nothing. You see, we will take in our boats you, and the baggage, and the mule, and the horse; one of our people will lead the camels through the lake; they are too big to come into the boat. When one comes to reckon on all this load, and all the trouble and fatigue, the price seems absolutely less than nothing.” “True, there will be some trouble in the affair, no one denies it; but let us have a distinct understanding. How many sapeks do you ask?” “Oh, scarcely any. We are all brothers; and you, brothers, need all our assistance in travelling. We know that; we feel it in our hearts. If we could only afford it, we should have pleasure in carrying you over for nothing; but look at our clothes. We poor fellows are very poor. Our boat is all we have to depend upon. It is necessary that we should gain a livelihood by that; five *lis*’ sail, three men, a horse, a mule, and luggage; but come, as you are spiritual persons, we will only charge you two thousand sapeks.” The price was preposterous; we made no answer. We took our animals by the bridle and turned back, pretending that we would not continue our journey. Scarcely had we advanced twenty paces before the ferryman ran after us. “Sirs Lamas, are not you going to cross the water in my boat?” “Why,” said we drily, “doubtless you are too rich to take any trouble in the matter. If you really wanted to let your boat, would you ask two thousand sapeks?” “Two thousand sapeks is the price I ask; but what will you give?” “If you like to take five hundred sapeks, let us set out at once; it is already late.” “Return, Sirs Lamas; get into the boat”; and he caught hold, as he spoke, of the halters of our beasts. We considered that the price was

at last fixed; but we had scarcely arrived on the border of the lake when the ferryman exclaimed to one of his comrades: "Come, our fortune deserts us today; we must bear much fatigue for little remuneration. We shall have to row five *lis*, and after all we shall have only fifteen hundred sapeks to divide between eight of us." "Fifteen hundred sapeks!" exclaimed we; "you are mocking us; we will leave you"; and we turned back for the second time. Some mediators, inevitable persons in all Chinese matters, presented themselves and undertook to settle the fare. It was at length decided that we should pay eight hundred sapeks; the sum was enormous, but we had no other means of pursuing our way. The boatmen knew this and took accordingly the utmost advantage of our position.

The embarkation was effected with extraordinary celerity, and we soon quitted the shore. Whilst we advanced by means of the oars on the surface of the lake, a man mounted on a camel and leading two others after him followed a path traced out by a small boat rowed by a waterman. The latter was obliged every now and then to sound the depth of the water, and the camel-driver needed to be very attentive in directing his course in the straight trail left by the boat, lest he should be swallowed up in the holes beneath the water. The camels advanced slowly, stretching out their long necks and at times leaving only their heads and the extremity of their humps visible above the lake. We were in continual alarm; for, these animals not being able to swim, there only needed a false step to precipitate them to the bottom.

Thanks to the protection of God, all arrived safe at the dike which had been pointed out to us. The boatmen, after assisting us to replace in a hasty manner our baggage on the camels, indicated the point whither we must direct our steps. "Do you see, to the right, that small *miao* (pagoda)? A little from the *miao*, do you observe those wooden huts and those

black nets hanging from long poles? There you will find the ferry-boat to cross the river. Follow this dike, and go in peace."

After having proceeded with difficulty for half an hour, we reached the ferry-boat. The boatmen immediately came to us. "Sirs Lamas," said they, "you intend, doubtless, to cross the Hoang-Ho, but you see this evening the thing is impracticable — the sun is just setting." "You are right; we will cross tomorrow at day-break; meanwhile let us settle the price, so that tomorrow we may lose no time in deliberation." The watermen would have preferred waiting till the morrow to discuss this important point, expecting we should offer a much larger sum when just about to embark. At first their demands were preposterous; happily, there were two boats which competed together; otherwise we should have been ruined. The price was ultimately fixed at a thousand sapeks. The passage was not long, it is true, for the river had nearly resumed its bed; but the waters were very rapid, and, moreover, the camels had to ride. The amount, enormous in itself, appeared, upon the whole, moderate, considering the difficulty and trouble of the passage. This business arranged, we considered how we should pass the night. We could not think of seeking an asylum in the fishermen's cabins; even if they had been sufficiently large, we should have had a considerable objection to place our effects in the hands of these folks. We were sufficiently acquainted with the Chinese not to trust to their honesty. We looked out for a place whereon to set up our tent; but we could find nowhere a spot sufficiently dry: mud or stagnant water covered the ground in all directions. About a hundred yards from the shore was a small *miao*, or temple of idols; a narrow, high path led to it. We proceeded thither to see if we could find there a place of repose. It turned out as we wished. A portico, supported by three stone pillars, stood before the entrance door, which was secured by

a large padlock. This portico, made of granite, was raised a few feet from the ground, and you ascended it by five steps. We determined to pass the night here.

The Warden of the Little Temple. An Exciting Embarkation.

Just as we were lying down, a man approached us, holding in one hand a small paper lantern. He opened the grating which led to the interior of the *miao*, prostrated himself thrice, burned incense in the censers, and lighted a small lamp at the feet of the idol. This personage was not a bonze. His hair, hanging in a tress, and his blue garments showed him to be a layman. When he had finished his idolatrous ceremonies, he came to us. "I will leave the door open," said he; "you'll sleep more comfortably inside than in the portico." "Thanks," replied we; "shut the door, however; for we shall do very well where we are. Why have you been burning incense? Who is the idol of this place?" "It is the spirit of the Hoang-Ho, who inhabits this *miao*. I have burned incense before him in order that our fishing may be productive and that our boats may float without danger." "The words you utter," cried Samdadchiemba, insolently, "are mere *hou-choue* (stuff and nonsense). How did it happen that the other day, when the inundation took place, the *miao* was flooded, and your *pou-sa* was covered with mud?" To this sudden apostrophe the pagan churchwarden made no answer, but took to his heels. We were much surprised at this proceeding; but the explanation came next morning.

We stretched ourselves on our goatskins once more and endeavoured to sleep, but sleep came slowly and but for a brief period. Placed between marshes and the river, we felt throughout the night a piercing cold, which seemed to transfix us to the very marrow. The sky was pure and serene, and in the morning we saw that the marshes around were covered with a thick sheet of ice. We made our preparations for de-

parture, but upon collecting the various articles a handkerchief was missing. We remembered that we had imprudently hung it upon the grating at the entrance of the *miao*, so that it was half in and half out of the building. No person had been near the place except the man who had come to pay his devotions to the idol. We could, therefore, without much rashness, attribute the robbery to him, and this explained why he had made his exit so rapidly, without replying to Samdad-chiamba. We could easily have found the man, for he was one of the fishermen engaged upon the station, but it would have been a fruitless labour. Our only effectual course would have been to seize the thief in the act.

Next morning we placed our baggage upon the camels and proceeded to the riverside, fully persuaded that we had a miserable day before us. The camels having a horror of the water, it is sometimes impossible to make them get into a boat. You may pull their noses or nearly kill them with blows, yet not make them advance a step; they would die sooner. The boat before us seemed especially to present almost insurmountable obstacles. It was not flat and large, like those which generally serve as ferry-boats. Its sides were very high, so that the animals were obliged to leap over them at the risk and peril of breaking their legs. If you wanted to move a carriage into it, you had first of all to pull the vehicle to pieces.

The boatmen had already taken hold of our baggage for the purpose of conveying it into their abominable vehicle, but we stopped them. "Wait a moment; we must first try to get the camels in. If they won't enter the boat, there is no use in placing the baggage in it." "Whence came your camels, that they can't get into people's boats?" "It matters little whence they came; what we tell you is that the tall white camel has never hitherto consented to cross any river, even in a flat-boat." "Tall camel or short, flat-boat or high boat, into

the boat the camel shall go," and so saying, the ferryman ran and fetched an immense cudgel. "Catch hold of the string in the camel's nose," cried he to a companion. "We'll see if we can't make the brute get into the boat." The man in the boat hauled at the string; the man behind beat the animal vehemently on the legs with his cudgel, but all to no purpose; the poor camel sent forth piercing cries and stretched out its long neck. The blood flowed from its nostrils, the sweat from every pore; but not an inch forward would the creature move; yet one step would have placed it in the boat, the sides of which were touched by its forelegs.

We could not endure the painful spectacle. "No more of this," we cried to the ferryman; "it is useless to beat the animal. You might break its legs or kill it before it would consent to enter your boat." The two men at once left off, for they were tired, the one of pulling, the other of beating. What were we to do? We had almost made up our minds to ascend the banks of the river until we found some flat-boat, when the ferryman all at once jumped up, radiant with an idea. "We will make another attempt," cried he, "and if that fails I give the matter up. Take the string gently," he added to a companion, "and keep the camel's feet as close as ever you can to the side of the boat." Then, going back for some paces, he dashed forward with a spring and threw himself with all his weight upon the animal's rear. The shock, so violent and unexpected, occasioned the camel somewhat to bend its forelegs. A second shock immediately succeeded the first, and the animal, in order to prevent itself from falling into the water, had no remedy but to raise its feet and place them within the boat. This effected, the rest was easy. A few pinches of the nose and a few blows sufficed to impel the hind legs after the fore, and the white camel was at last in the boat to the extreme satisfaction of all present. The other

animals were embarked after the same fashion, and we proceeded on our watery way.

The Waterman's Quarrel with a Camel. Further Hardships.

First, however, the ferryman deemed it necessary that the animals should kneel, so that no movement of theirs on the river might occasion an overturn. His proceeding to this effect was exceedingly comic. He first went to one camel and then to the other, pulling now this down, then that. When he approached the larger animal, the creature, remembering the man's treatment, discharged in his face a quantity of the grass ruminating within its jaws, a compliment which the boatman returned by spitting in the animal's face. And the absurdity was that the work made no progress. One camel was no sooner induced to kneel down than the other got up, and so the men went backwards and forwards, gradually covered by the angry creatures with the green substance, half masticated and nauseating, which each animal in turn spat against him. At length, when Samdadchiemba had sufficiently entertained himself with the scene, he went to the camels and, exercising his recognized authority over them, made them kneel in the manner desired.

We at length floated upon the waters of the Yellow River; but though there were four boatmen, their united strength could scarcely make head against the force of the current. We had effected about half our voyage when a camel suddenly rose and shook the boat so violently that it was nearly upset. The boatmen, after ejaculating a tremendous oath, told us to look after our camels and prevent them from getting up, unless we wanted the whole party to be engulfed. The danger was indeed formidable. The camel, infirm upon its legs and yielding to every movement of the boat, menaced us with a catastrophe. Samdadchiemba, however, managed to

get quickly beside the animal and at once induced it to kneel, so that we were let off with our fright, and in due course reached the other side of the river.

At the moment of disembarkation the horse, impatient to be once more on land, leaped out of the boat, but striking, on its way, against the anchor, fell on its side in the mud. The ground not being yet dry, we were fain to take off our shoes and to carry the baggage on our shoulders to an adjacent eminence; there we asked the boatmen if we should be any great length of time in traversing the marsh and mud that lay stretched out before us. The chief boatman raised his head and, after looking for a while towards the sun, said: "It will soon be noon; by the evening you will reach the banks of the Little River; tomorrow you will find the ground dry." It was under these melancholy auspices that we proceeded upon our journey, through one of the most detestable districts to be found in the whole world.

We had been told in what direction we were to proceed; but the inundation had obliterated every trace of path and even of road, and we could only regulate our course by the nature of the ground, keeping as clear as we could of the deeper quagmires, sometimes making a long circuit in order to reach what seemed firmer ground and then, finding the supposed solid turf to be nothing more than a piece of water, green with stagnant matter and aquatic plants, having to turn back and, as it were, grope our way in another direction, fearful at every step of being plunged into some gulf of liquid mud.

By and by our animals, alarmed and wearied, could hardly proceed, and we were compelled to beat them severely and to exhaust our voices with bawling at them before they would move at all. The tall grass and plants of the marshes twisted about their legs, and it was only by leaps and at the risk of throwing off both baggage and riders that they could

extricate themselves. Thrice did the youngest camel lose its balance and fall; but on each occasion the spot on which it fell was providentially dry; had it stumbled in the mud, it would inevitably have been stifled.

On our way we met three Chinese travellers, who, by the aid of long staves, were making their laborious way through the marshes, carrying their shoes and clothes over their shoulders. We asked them in what direction we were likely to find a better road. "You would have been wiser," said they, "had you remained at Tchagan-Kouren; foot-passengers can scarcely make their way through these marshes: how do you suppose you can get on with your camels?" and with this consolatory assurance they quitted us, giving us a look of compassion, certain as they were that we should never get through the mud.

The sun was just setting when we perceived a Mongol habitation; we made our way direct to it, without heeding the difficulties of the road. In fact, experience had already taught us that selection was quite out of the question and that one way was as good as another in this universal slough. Making circuits merely lengthened the journey. The Tartars were frightened at our appearance, covered as we were with mud and perspiration; they immediately gave us some tea and generously offered us the hospitality of their dwelling. The small mud house in which they lived, though built upon an eminence, had been half carried away by the inundation. We could not conceive what had induced them to fix their abode in this horrible district, but they told us that they were employed to tend the herds belonging to some Chinese of Tchagan-Kouren. After resting for a while we requested information as to the best route to pursue, and we were told that the river was only five *lis* off, that its banks were dry, and that we should find there boats to carry us to the other side. "When you have crossed the Paga-Gol (Little River)," said

our hosts, "you may proceed in peace; you will meet with no more water to interrupt you." We thanked these good Tartars for their kindness and resumed our journey.

After half an hour's march we discovered before us a large extent of water, studded with fishing-vessels. The title Little River may, for anything we know, be appropriate enough under ordinary circumstances, but at the time of our visit the Paga-Gol was a broad sea. We pitched our tent on the bank, which, by reason of its elevation, was perfectly dry, and the remarkable excellence of the pasturage determined us upon remaining in this place several days, in order to give rest to our animals, which since their departure from Tchagan-Kouren had undergone enormous fatigue; we ourselves, too, felt the necessity of some relaxation after the sufferings which these horrible marshes had inflicted upon us.



WATERFOWL AND BIRDS OF PASSAGE.

CHAPTER VI

UPON taking possession of our post our first business was to excavate a ditch round the tent, in order that, should rain occur, the water might be carried into a pond below. The excavated earth served to make a mound round the tent; and, within, the pack-saddles and furniture of the camels formed very comfortable bedsteads for us. Having made our new habitation as neat as possible, the next business was to make our persons neat also.

We had now been travelling for nearly six weeks and still wore the same clothing we had assumed on our departure. The incessant pricklings with which we were harassed sufficiently indicated that our attire was peopled with the filthy vermin to which the Chinese and Tartars are familiarly accustomed, but which with Europeans are objects of horror and disgust — lice, which of all our miseries on our long journey have been the greatest. Hunger and thirst, fierce

winds and piercing cold, wild beasts, robbers, avalanches, menaced death and actual discomfort, all had been as nothing compared with the incessant misery occasioned by these dreadful vermin.

Before quitting Tchagan-Kouren we had bought in a chemist's shop a few sapeks' worth of mercury. We now made with it a prompt and specific remedy against the lice. We had formerly got this receipt from some Chinese, and, as it may be useful to others, we think it right to describe it here. You take half an ounce of mercury, which you mix with old tea-leaves, previously reduced to paste by mastication. To render this softer you generally add saliva; water would not have the same effect. You must afterwards bruise and stir it awhile, so that the mercury may be divided into little balls as fine as dust. You infuse this composition into a string of cotton, loosely twisted, which you hang round the neck; the lice are sure to bite at the bait, and they thereupon as surely swell, become red, and die forthwith. In China and in Tartary you have to renew this sanitary necklace once a month, for otherwise in these dirty countries you could not possibly keep clear from vermin, which swarm in every Chinese house and in every Mongol tent.

The Tartars are acquainted with the cheap and efficacious anti-lice mixture I have described, but they make no use of it. Accustomed from their infancy to live amid vermin, they at last take no heed whatever of them, except, indeed, when the number becomes so excessive as to involve the danger of their being absolutely eaten up. Upon such a juncture they strip off their clothes and have a grand battue, all the members of the family and any friends who may have dropped in taking part in the sport. Even lamas who may be present share in the hunt, with this distinction, that they do not kill the game, but merely catch it and throw it away; the reason being that, according to the doctrine of metempsychosis, to

kill any living being whatever is to incur the danger of homicide, since the smallest insect before you may be the transmigration of a man. Such is the general opinion; but we have met with lamas whose views on this subject were more enlightened. They admitted that persons belonging to the sacerdotal class should abstain from killing animals; but not, said they, in fear of committing a murder by killing a man transmigrated into an animal, but because to kill is essentially antagonistic with the gentleness which should characterize a man of prayer, who is ever in communication with the Deity.

There are some lamas who carry this scruple to a point approaching the puerile, so that as they ride along, they are constantly manœuvring their horses in and out, here and there, in order to avoid trampling upon some insect or other that presents itself in their path. Yet, say they, the holiest among them occasion inadvertently the death every day of a great many living creatures. It is to expiate these involuntary murders that they undergo fasting and penitence, that they recite certain prayers, and that they make prostrations.

We, who had no such scruples and whose conscience stood upon a solid basis as to the transmigration of souls, concocted as effectively as possible our anti-louse preparation, doubling the dose of mercury in our anxiety to kill the greatest practicable number of the vermin that had been so long tormenting us by day and by night.

The Pleasures of Rest. Washing. A Fuel-Hunt.

It would have been to little purpose merely to kill the present vermin; it was necessary to withhold any sort of shelter or encouragement from their too probable successors, and the first point, with this view, was to wash all our underclothing, which for some time past had not been subjected to any such operation. For nearly two months since our departure we had been wholly dependent in all respects upon ourselves,

and this necessity had compelled us to learn a little of various professions with which we had been previously unacquainted; becoming our own tailors and shoe-menders, for example, when clothes or shoes required repairs. The course of nomadic life now practically introduced us also to the occupation of washermen. After boiling some ashes and soaking our linen in the lye we next proceeded to wash it in an adjacent pond. One great stone on which to place the linen when washed and another wherewith to beat it while washing were our only implements of trade; but we got on very well, for the softness of the pond water gave every facility for cleansing the articles. Before long we had the delight of seeing our linen once more clean; and when, having dried it on the grass, we folded it and took it home to our tent, we were quite radiant with satisfaction.

The quiet and ease which we enjoyed in this encampment rapidly remedied the fatigue we had undergone in the marshes. The weather was magnificent, all that we could have possibly desired. By day, a gentle, soothing heat; by night, a sky pure and serene; plenty of fuel; excellent and abundant pasturage; nitrous water, which our camels delighted in; in a word, everything to renovate the health and revive the spirits. Our rule of daily life may appear odd enough to some, and perhaps not altogether in harmony with the regulations of monastic houses, but it was in exact adaptation to the circumstances and wants of our little community.

Every morning, with the first dawn, before the earliest rays of the sun struck upon our tent, we rose spontaneously, requiring neither call-bell nor valet to rouse us. Our brief toilet made, we rolled up our goatskins and placed them in a corner; then we swept out the tent and put the cooking utensils in order, for we were desirous of having everything about us as clean and comfortable as possible. All things go by com-

parison in this world. The interior of our tent, which would have made a European laugh, filled with admiration the Tartars who from time to time paid us a visit. The cleanliness of our wooden cups, our kettle always well polished, our clothes not altogether as yet encrusted with grease — all this contrasted favourably with the dirt and disorder of Tartar habitations.

Having arranged our apartment, we said prayers together and then dispersed each apart in the desert to engage in meditation upon some pious thought. The exercise which followed these meditations was, it must be admitted, far from mystic in its character; but it was necessary and not wholly without entertainment in its course. Each of us hung a bag from his shoulders and went in different directions to seek argols for fuel. Those who have never led a nomadic life will, of course, find it difficult to understand how this occupation could possibly develop any enjoyment. Yet when one is lucky enough to find, half concealed among the grass, an argol recommendable for its size and dryness, there comes over the heart a gentle joy, one of those sudden emotions which create a transient happiness. The pleasure at finding a fine argol is cognate with that which the hunter feels when he discovers the track of game; with which the boy regards, his eyes sparkling, the linnet's nest he has long sought; with which the fisherman sees quivering at the end of his line a large fish; nay, if we may compare small things with great, one might even compare this pleasure with the enthusiasm of a Leverrier when he has discovered a new planet.

Our sack once filled with argols, we returned and piled the contents with pride at the entrance of the tent; then we struck a light and set the fire in movement, and, while the tea was boiling in the pot, pounded the meal and put some cakes to bake in the ashes. The repast, it is observable, was simple and modest, but it was always extremely delicious, first be-

cause we had prepared it ourselves, and secondly because our appetites provided most efficient seasoning.

Nomadic Birds. A Model Ménage. The Dragon's Foot.

After breakfast, while Samdadchiemba was collecting round the tent the animals, which had dispersed in search of pasturage, we recited a portion of our breviary. Towards noon we indulged in a brief repose, a few minutes of gentle but sound sleep, never interrupted by nightmare or by unpleasant dreams. This repose was all the more necessary that the evenings were prolonged far into the night. It was always with difficulty that we tore ourselves from our walks by moonlight on the banks of the river. During the day all was silent and tranquil around us; but so soon as the shades of night began to overspread the desert, the scene became animated and noisy. Aquatic birds, arriving in immense flocks, diffused themselves over the various pools, and soon thousands of shrill cries filled the air with wild harmony. The cries of anger, the accents of passion, proceeding from those myriads of migratory birds, as they disputed among themselves possession of the tufts of marsh grass in which they desired to pass the night, gave one quite the idea of a numerous people in all the fury of civil war, fighting and clamouring, in agitation and violence, for some supposed advantage, brief as this Eastern night.

Tartary is populated with nomadic birds. Look up when you may, you will see them floating high in air, the vast battalions forming, in their systematically capricious flight, a thousand fantastic outlines, dissipating as soon as formed, forming again as soon as dissipated, like the creations of a kaleidoscope. Oh, how exactly are these migrant birds in their place amid the deserts of Tartary, where man himself is never fixed in one spot, but is constantly on the move! It was very pleasant to listen to the distant hum of these winged bands, wandering about like ourselves. As we reflected upon

their long peregrinations and glanced in thought over the countries which their rapid flight must have comprehended, the recollection of our native land came vividly before us. "Who knows," we would say to each other, "who knows but that among these birds there are some who have traversed — who have, perhaps, alighted for a while in our dear France: who have sought transient repose and refreshment in the plains of Languedoc, or on the heights of the Jura? After visiting our own country they have doubtless pursued their route towards the north of Europe, and have come hither through the snows of Siberia and of Upper Tartary. Oh, if these birds could understand our words, or if we could speak their tongue, how many questions should we not put to them! "Alas! we did not then know that for two years more we should be deprived of all communication with our native land.

The migratory birds which visit Tartary are for the most part known in Europe; such as wildgeese, wild-ducks, teal, storks, bustards, and so on. There is one bird which may deserve particular mention: the Youen-Yang, an aquatic bird frequenting ponds and marshes; it is of the size and form of the wild-duck, but its beak, instead of being flat, is round, its red head is sprinkled with white, its tail is black, and the rest of its plumage a fine purple; its cry is exceedingly loud and mournful, not the song of a bird, but a sort of clear, prolonged sigh, resembling the plaintive tones of a man under suffering. These birds always go in pairs; they frequent, in an especial manner, desert and marshy places. You see them incessantly skimming over the surface of the waters without the couple ever separating from each other; if one flies away, the other immediately follows; and that which dies first does not leave its companion long in widowhood, for it is soon consumed by sorrow and lonesomeness. Youen is the name of the male, Yang that of the female: Youen-Yang their common denomination.

We remarked in Tartary another species of migratory bird, which offers various peculiarities singular in themselves and perhaps unknown to naturalists. It is about the size of a quail; its eyes, of a brilliant black, are encircled by a magnificent ring of azure; its body is of ash colour, speckled with black; its legs, instead of feathers, are covered with a sort of long, rough hair, like that of the musk-deer; its feet are totally different from those of any other bird; they exactly resemble the paws of the green lizard, and are covered with scales so hard as to resist the edge of the sharpest knife. This singular creature, therefore, partakes at once of the bird, of the quadruped, and of the reptile. The Chinese call it *Loung-Kio* (Dragon's Foot). These birds make their periodical appearance in vast numbers from the north, especially after a great fall of snow. They fly with astonishing swiftness, and the movement of their wings makes a loud, rattling noise, like that of heavy hail.

While we had the charge, in northern Mongolia, of the little Christendom of the Valley of Black Waters, one of our Christians, a skilful huntsman, brought us two of these birds which he had caught alive. They were excessively ferocious; no sooner was your hand extended to touch them than the hair on their legs bristled; and if you had the temerity to stroke them, you instantly were assailed with vehement strokes of the bill. The nature of these Dragon's Feet was evidently so wild as to preclude the possibility of preserving them alive: they would touch nothing we offered them. Perceiving, therefore, that they must soon die of starvation, we determined to kill and eat them; their flesh was of agreeable, pheasant-like savour, but terribly tough.

Adventures with a Fisherman.

The Mongols are disinclined to fishing, and accordingly the highly productive lakes and ponds which one meets with

so frequently in Tartary have become the property of Chinese speculators, who, with the characteristic knavery of their nation, having first obtained from the Tartar kings permission to fish in their states, have gradually converted this toleration into a monopoly most rigorously enforced. The Paga-Gol (Little River), near which we were now encamped, has several Chinese fishing stations upon its banks.

During the first night of our encampment in this locality we were kept awake by a strange noise, constantly recurring in the distance: as it seemed to us, the muffled and irregular roll of drums; with day-break the noise continued, but more intermittent and less loud; it apparently came from the water. We went out and proceeded towards the bank of the lake, where a fisherman, who was boiling his tea in a little kettle, supported by three stones, explained the mystery; he told us that during the night all the fishermen, seated in their barks, keep moving over the water in all directions, beating wooden drums for the purpose of alarming the fish and driving them towards the places where the nets are spread. The poor man whom we interrogated had himself passed the whole night in this painful toil. His red, swollen eyes and his drawn face clearly indicated that it was long since he had enjoyed adequate rest. "Just now," he said, "we have a great deal of work upon our hands; there is no time to be lost if we wish to make any money of the business. The fishing season is very short; at the outside not more than three months; and a few days hence we shall be obliged to withdraw. The Paga-Gol will be frozen, and not a fish will be obtainable. You see, Sirs Lamas, we have no time to lose. I have passed all the night hunting the fish about; when I have drunk some tea and eaten a few spoonfuls of oatmeal, I shall get into my boat and visit the nets I have laid out there westward; then I shall deposit the fish I have taken in the osier reservoirs you see yonder; then I shall examine my nets, and

mend them if they need mending; then I shall take a brief repose, and after that, when the old grandfather (the sun) goes down, I shall once more cast my nets; then I shall row over the water, now here, now there, beating my drum, and so it goes on." These details interested us, and, as our occupations at the moment were not very urgent, we asked the fisherman if he would allow us to accompany him when he went to raise his nets. "Since personages like you," answered he, "do not disdain to get into my poor boat and to view my unskilful and disagreeable fishing, I accept the benefit you propose."

Hereupon we sat down in a corner of his rustic hearth to wait until he had taken his repast. The meal of the fisherman was as short as the preparations for it had been hasty. When the tea was sufficiently boiled, he poured out a basinful of it, threw into this a handful of oatmeal, which he partially kneaded with his forefinger, and then, after having pressed it a little and rolled it into a sort of cake, he swallowed it without any other preparation. After he had three or four times repeated the same operation, the dinner was at an end. This manner of living had nothing in it to excite our curiosity; having adopted the nomad way of living, a sufficiently long experience had made it familiar to us.

We entered his small boat and proceeded to enjoy the pleasure of fishing. After having relished for some moments the delight of a quiet sail on the tranquil water, smooth and unbroken as glass, through troops of cormorants and wild-geese, which were disporting on the surface of the expanse and which, half running, half flying, made a free passage for us as we advanced, we reached the place where the nets lay. At intervals we saw pieces of wood floating on the water, to which the nets were attached, which rested at the bottom. When we drew them up, we saw the fish glitter as they struggled in the meshes. These fish were generally large, but the

fisherman only kept the largest; those that were under half a pound he threw back into the water.

After having examined a few of the nets, he stopped to see if the haul had been productive. Already the two wells, constructed at the extremities of the boat, were nearly full. "Sirs Lamas," said the fisherman, "do you eat fish? I will sell you some if you please." At this proposition the two poor



FISHING PARTY.

French missionaries looked at each other without saying a word. In that look you might see that they were by no means averse from trying the flavour of the fish of the Yellow River, but that they dared not, a sufficient reason keeping them in suspense. "How do you sell your fish?" "Not dear; eighty sapeks a pound." "Eighty sapeks! why that is dearer than mutton." "You speak the words of truth; but what is mutton compared with the fish of the Hoang-Ho?" "No matter; it is too dear for us. We have still far to go; our purse is low, we must economize." The fisherman did not

insist; he took his oar and directed the boat towards those nets which had not yet been drawn up from the water. "For what reason," asked we, "do you throw back so much fish? Is it because the quality is inferior?" "Oh, no; all the fish in the Yellow River are excellent; these are too small, that is all." "Ah, just so; next year they will be bigger. It is a matter of calculation; you refrain now so that in the end you may get more by them." The fisherman laughed. "It is not that," he said; "we do not hope to recapture these fish. Every year the basin is filled with fresh fish, brought hither by the overflowings of the Hoang-Ho; there come great and small; we take the first, and the others we throw back, because they do not sell well. The fish here are very abundant. We are able to select the best. . . . Sirs Lamas, if you like to have these little fish, I will not throw them back." The offer was accepted, and the small fry, as they came, were placed in a little basket.

When the fishing was over, we found ourselves possessors of a very respectable supply of fish. Before leaving the boat we washed an old basket, and, having deposited our fish in it, we marched in triumph to the tent. "Where have you been?" exclaimed Samdadchiemba as soon as he saw us; "the tea is now boiled, and it soon gets cold; I have boiled it up again; it has again got cold." "Pour out some of your tea," answered we. "We will not have oatmeal today, but some fresh fish. Place some loaves under the ashes to bake." Our prolonged absence had put Samdadchiemba in an ill humour. His forehead was more contracted than usual, and his small black eyes flashed with displeasure. But when he beheld in the basket the fish, which were still in motion, his face relaxed into a smile, and his countenance insensibly grew more cheerful. He opened smilingly the bag of flour, the strings of which were never untied except on rare occasions. Whilst he was busily occupied with the pastry, we took some

of the fish and proceeded to the shores of a lake at a short distance from the tent. We had scarcely got there when Samdadchiemba ran to us with all his might. He drew aside the four corners of the cloth which contained the fish. "What are you going to do?" said he, with an anxious air. "We are going to cut open and scale this fish." "Oh, that is not well; my spiritual fathers, wait a little; you must not transgress thus." "What are you talking about? Who is committing a sin?" "Why, look at these fish; they are still moving. You must let them die in peace before you open them: is it not a sin to kill a living creature?" "Go make your bread and let us alone. Are we always to be pestered with your notions of metempsychosis? Do you still think that men are transformed into beasts, and beasts into men?" The lips of our Dchiahour opened for a long laugh. "Bah!" said he, striking his forehead, "what a thick head I have; I did not think of that; I had forgotten the doctrine," and he returned not a little ashamed at having come to give us such ridiculous advice. The fish were fried in mutton fat, and we found them exquisite.

Kindness Recompensed.

During our few days' rest we considered the means of crossing the Paga-Gol. A Chinese family having obtained from the King of the Ortous the privilege of conveying travellers across, we were obliged to address ourselves to the master of the boat. He had undertaken to conduct us to the other side, but we had not yet agreed about the fare; he required upwards of a thousand sapeks. The sum appeared to us exorbitant, and we waited.

On the third day of our halt we perceived a fisherman coming towards our tent, dragging himself along with great difficulty by the aid of a long staff. His pale and extremely meagre face showed that he was a man in suffering. As soon

as he had seated himself beside our hearth, "Brother," said we, "it seems that your days are not happy." "Ah," said he, "my misfortune is great, but what am I to do? I must submit to the irrevocable laws of heaven. It is now a fortnight since, as I was going to visit a Mongol tent, I was bitten in the leg by a mad dog; there has been formed a wound which grows larger and mortifies day by day. They told me that you were from the western heaven, and I am come to you. The men of the western heaven, say the Tartar lamas, have an unlimited power. With a single word they are able to cure the most grievous disorders." "They have deceived you when they said we had such great powers"; and hereupon we took occasion to elucidate to this man the great truths of the faith. But he was a Chinese and, like all his nation, but little heedful of religious matters. Our words only glanced over his heart; his hurt absorbed all his thoughts. We resolved to treat his case with the Kou-Kouo, or bean of St. Ignatius. This vegetable, of a brown or ashy colour and of a substance which resembles horn, extremely hard and of intolerable bitterness, is a native of the Philippine Isles. The manner of using the Kou-Kouo is to bruise it in cold water, to which it communicates its bitterness. This water, taken inwardly, modifies the heat of the blood and extinguishes internal inflammation. It is an excellent specific for all sorts of wounds and contusions and, enjoying a high character in the Chinese *materia medica*, is sold in all chemists' shops. The veterinary doctors also apply it with great success to the internal diseases of cattle and sheep. In the north of China we have often witnessed the salutary effects of the Kou-Kouo.

We infused the powder of one of these beans in some cold water, with which we washed the poor man's wound, and we supplied some clean linen in place of the disgustingly dirty rags which previously served for a bandage. When we had done all we could for the sufferer, we observed that he

still seemed very embarrassed in his manner. His face was red with blushes, he held down his eyes, and he began several sentences which he could not complete. "Brother," said we, "you have something on your mind." "Holy personages, you see how poor I am. You have tended my wound, and you have given me a great mug of healing water to take; I know not what I can offer in exchange for all this." "If this be the subject of your uneasiness," said we, "be at once reassured. In doing what we could for your leg we only fulfilled a duty commanded by our religion. The remedies we have prepared we freely give you." Our words evidently relieved the poor fisherman from a very grave embarrassment. He immediately prostrated himself before us and touched the ground thrice with his forehead, in token of his gratitude. Before withdrawing he asked us whether we intended to remain where we were for any length of time. We told him that we should gladly depart the next day, but that we had not as yet agreed with the ferryman as to the fare. "I have a boat," said the fisherman, "and since you have tended my wound, I will endeavour tomorrow to convey you over the water. If my boat belonged entirely to myself, I would at once undertake the matter; but as I have two partners, I must first get their consent. Moreover, we must procure some particulars as to our course; we fishermen are not acquainted with the depth of water at all the points of the passage. There are dangerous places here and there, which we must ascertain the exact nature and locality of beforehand, so that we may not incur some misfortune. Don't say anything more about the matter to the ferry people. I will come back in the course of the evening, and we will talk over the subject."

These words gave us hopes of being able to continue our journey without too heavy an outlay for the river passage. As he had promised, the fisherman returned in the evening. "My partners," said he, "were not at first willing to

undertake this job, because it would lose them a day's fishing. I promised that you would give them four hundred sapeks, and so the affair was arranged. Tomorrow we will make inquiries as to the best course to follow on the river. Next morning, before sunrise, fold your tent, load your camels, and come down to the riverside. If you see any of the ferry people, don't tell them you are going to give us four hundred sapeks. As they have the sole right of carrying passengers for hire, they might prosecute us for carrying you if they knew you had paid us anything."

Difficult Passage of the Paga-Gol.

At the appointed hour we proceeded to the fisherman's hut. In a minute the baggage was packed in the boat, and the two missionaries seated themselves beside it, attended by the boatman whose wound they had cured. It was agreed that a young companion of his should ride the horse across the shallows, leading the mule, while Samdadchiemba in like manner was to conduct the camels over. When all was ready, we started, the boat following one course, the horses and camels another, for the latter were obliged to make long circuits in order to avoid the deeper parts of the river.

The navigation was at first very pleasant. We floated tranquilly over the broad surface of the waters, in a small skiff propelled by a single man with two light sculls. The pleasure of this water party amid the deserts of Mongolia was not, however, of long duration. The poetry of the thing, soon at an end, was succeeded by some very doleful prose. We were advancing gently over the smooth water, vaguely listening to the measured dips of the sculls, when, all of a sudden, we were aroused by a clamour behind, of which the shrieks of the camels constituted a prominent share. We stopped, and, looking round, perceived that horse, mule, and camels were struggling in the water without making any on-

ward progress. In the general confusion we distinguished Samdadchiemba flourishing his arms as if to recall us. Our boatman was not at all disposed to accept the invitation, reluctant as he was to quit the easy current he had found; but as we insisted, he turned back and rowed towards the other party.

Samdadchiemba was purple with rage. As soon as we came up to him, he furiously assailed the boatman with invectives. "Did you want to drown us," bawled he, "that you gave us for a guide a fellow that doesn't know a yard of the way? Here are we amid gulfs of which none of us know the depth or extent." The animals, in fact, would neither advance nor recede; beat them as you might, there they remained immovable. The boatman hurled maledictions at his partner. "If you did not know the way, what did you come for? The only thing to be done now is to go back to the hut and tell your cousin to get on the horse; he'll be a better guide than you."

To return for a better guide was clearly the safest course, but this was no easy matter; the animals had got so frightened at finding themselves surrounded with such a body of water that they would not stir. The young guide was at his wits' end; it was in vain that he beat the horse and pulled the bridle this way and that; the horse struggled and splashed up the water, and that was all; not an inch would it move, one way or the other. The young man, no better horseman than guide, at last lost his balance and fell into the water; he disappeared for a moment, to our increased consternation, and then rose at a little distance, just where he could stand and have his head above water. Samdadchiemba grew furious, but at last, seeing no other alternative, he quietly took off all his clothes as he sat on the camel, threw them into the boat, and slipped down the camel's side into the stream. "Take that man into your boat," cried he to our boatman; "I'll

have nothing more to do with him. I'll go back and find someone who can guide us properly." He then made his way back through the water, which sometimes rose up to his neck, leading the animals, whose confidence returned when they saw themselves preceded by the Dchiahour.

Our hearts were filled with gratitude at observing the devotion and courage of this young neophyte, who for our sakes had not hesitated to plunge into the water, which at that season was bitterly cold. We anxiously followed him with our eyes until we saw him close upon the shore. "You may now," said the boatman, "be quite at your ease; he will find in my hut a man who will guide him so as to avoid the least danger."

We proceeded on our way, but the navigation was by no means so agreeable as before; the boatman could not find again the clear path on the waters which he was pursuing when we returned to aid Samdadchiemba, and, hampered with aquatic plants, the vessel made but very slow progress. We tried to mend matters by turning to the right and then to the left, but the difficulty only grew greater; the water was so shallow that the boat in its laboured advance turned up the mud. We were compelled ourselves to take the sculls, while the boatman, getting into the water and passing across his shoulders a rope, the other end of which was tied to the boat, tried to pull us along. We applied our united efforts to the task of moving the vessel, but all in vain; it scarcely advanced a foot. The boatman at last resumed his seat and folded his arms in utter despair. "Since we cannot get on by ourselves," said he, "we must wait here until the passage-boat comes up, and then follow in its course." We waited.

The boatman was evidently altogether disconcerted; he loudly reproached himself for having undertaken this laborious business; while we, on our parts, were angry with ourselves for having permitted a consideration of economy

to deter us from proceeding with the ferry-boat. We should have got into the water and waded to the shore, but, besides the difficulty connected with the baggage, the undertaking was dangerous in itself. The ground was so irregular that while at one moment you passed through water so shallow that it would scarcely float the boat, in the next moment you came to a hole deep enough to drown you three times over.

Encounter with the Prime Minister of the Ortous.

It was near noon when we saw three passage-boats passing us, which belonged to the family who enjoyed the monopoly of the ferry. After having with infinite labour extricated ourselves from the mud and attained the channel indicated by these boats, we were quietly following their course when they stopped, evidently awaiting us. We recognized the person with whom we had tried to bargain for our passage over, and he recognized us, as we could easily perceive by the angry glances which he directed against us. "You tortoise-egg," cried he to our boatman, "what have these Western men given you for the passage? They must have handed over a good bagful of sapeks to have induced you to trespass upon my rights! You and I will have a little talk about the matter by and by; be sure of that." "Don't answer him," whispered the boatman to us; then raising his voice and assuming an air of virtuous indignation, he cried to the ferryman: "What do you mean? You don't know what you're talking about. Consult the dictates of reason, instead of getting into a fury about nothing. These lamas have not given me a sapek; they have cured my leg with one of their Western specifics, and do you mean to say that in gratitude for such a benefit I am not to carry them over the Paga-Gol? My conduct is perfectly right and in conformity with religion." The ferryman, grumbling between his teeth, pretended to accept the statement thus made.

This little altercation was succeeded by profound silence on both sides. While the flotilla was peaceably advancing, pursuing the thread of a narrow current, just wide enough to admit the passage of a boat, we saw galloping towards us along the shallows a horseman whose rapid progress dashed aside the water in all directions. As soon as he came within call, he stopped short. "Make haste," cried he, "make haste; lose no time, row with all your might! The Prime Minister of the King of the Ortous is yonder on the prairie with his suite, waiting the arrival of your boat. Row quickly." He who spoke was a Tartar mandarin, his rank being indicated by the blue button which surmounted his hair cap. After issuing his orders he turned round, whipped his horse, and galloped back the same way he had come. When he was out of sight, the murmurs which his presence had restrained burst out. "Here's a day's labour marked out! A fine thing, truly, to be employed by a Mongol *Toudzelaktsi* (Minister of State), who'll make us row all day and then not give us a single sapek for our pains." "As to that, it need not so much matter; but the chances are that this *Tcheou-ta-dze* will break every bone in our bodies into the bargain." "Well, row away, it can't be helped; after all, we shall have the honour of ferrying over a *Toudzelaktsi*." This little piece of insolence excited a laugh, but the prevalent expression was that of furious invective against the Mongol authorities.

Our boatman remained silent; at last he said to us: "This is a most unfortunate day for me. I shall be obliged to carry some of this *Toudzelaktsi*'s suite, perhaps to Tchagan-Kouren itself. I am by myself, I am ill, and my boat ought this evening to be engaged in fishing." We were truly afflicted at this unlucky turn of affairs, feeling as we did that we were the involuntary occasion of the poor fisherman's misfortune. We knew very well that it was no trifling matter to be called into the service, in this way, of a Chinese or Tartar mandarin, for

whom everything must be done at once, unhesitatingly and cheerfully. No matter what may be the difficulties in the way, that which the mandarin desires must be done. Knowing the consequences of the meeting to our poor boatman, we determined to see what we could do to relieve him from the dilemma. "Brother," said we, "do not be uneasy; the mandarin who awaits the passage-boats is a Tartar, the minister of the king of this country. We will endeavour to manage matters for you. Go very slowly, stop now and then; while we are in your boat no one, attendants, mandarins, not even the *Toudzelaktsi* himself, will venture to say a word to you." We stopped short in our course, and meanwhile the three passage-boats reached the landing-place where the Mongol authorities were waiting for them. Soon two mandarins, with the blue button, galloped towards us. "What are you stopping there for?" cried they. "Why do you not come on?" We interposed. "Brother Mongols," said we, "request your master to content himself with the three boats already at the shore. This man is ill and has been rowing a long time; it would be cruel to prevent him from resting himself awhile." "Be it as you desire, Sirs Lamas," replied the horsemen, and they galloped back to the *Toudzelaktsi*.

We then resumed our course, but very slowly, in order to give time for every person to embark before we reached the shore. By and by we saw the three ferry-boats returning, filled with mandarins and their attendants; the horses were fording the river in another direction, under the guidance of one of the boatmen. As the party approached, our boatman grew more and more afraid; he did not venture to raise his eyes, and he scarcely breathed. At last the boats were level with each other. "Sirs Lamas," cried a voice, "is peace with you?" The red button in the cap of the speaker and the richness of his embroidered dress indicated that it was the prime minister who addressed to us this Tartar compliment.

“*Toudzelaktsi* of the Ortous,” replied we, “our progress is slow, but it is favourable; may peace also attend you.” After a few other civilities required by Tartar forms we proceeded on our way. When we had attained a safe distance from the mandarins, our boatman was perfectly relieved; we had extricated him from a most serious difficulty. The ferry-boats, it was probable, would be engaged at least three days in their gratuitous labour, for, the *Toudzelaktsi* not choosing to travel across the marshes, the boats would have to convey him down the Yellow River all the way to Tchagan-Kouren.

After a long, laborious, and dangerous passage we reached the other side of the waters.

The sun was just about to set. We would willingly have encamped at once, for we were exhausted with hunger and fatigue, but we could not possibly do so, for we had, they told us, fully ten *lis* to journey before we should get out of the mud. We loaded our camels, therefore, and proceeded onward, completing the miserable day in pain and suffering. Night had closed in before we came to a place where we could set up our tent; we had no strength left for preparing the usual meal; so, drinking some cold water and eating a few handfuls of millet, we lay down, after a brief prayer, and fell into a deep slumber.



ELECTION OF A LIVING BUDDHA.

CHAPTER VII

THE sun was already very high when we rose. On leaving the tent we looked round us, in order to get acquainted with this new country, which the darkness of the preceding evening had not allowed us to examine. It appeared to us dismal and arid; but we were happy, on any terms, to lose sight of bogs and swamps. We had left behind us the Yellow River, with its overflowing waters, and entered the sandy steppes of Ortous.

The land of Ortous is divided into seven banners; it extends a hundred leagues from east to west, and seventy from south to north. It is surrounded by the Yellow River on the west, east, and north, and by the Great Wall on the south. This country has been subjected, at all periods, to the influence of the political revolutions by which the Chinese Empire has been agitated. The Chinese and Tartar conquerors have taken possession of it in turns and made it the theatre

of sanguinary wars. During the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries it remained under the sceptre of the kings of Hia, who derived their origin from the Thou-Pa Tartars of the land of Si-Fan. The capital of their kingdom, called Hia-Tcheou, was situated at the foot of the Alécha mountains between the Hoang-Ho and the Great Wall. At present this town is called Ning-Hia, and belongs to the province Kan-Sou. In 1227 the kingdom of Hia, and afterwards Ortous, were involved in the common desolation by the victories of Jenghiz Khan, founder of the Tartar dynasty of the Youen.

After the expulsion of the Tartar Mongols by the Ming, the Ortous fell under the power of the Khan of the Tchakar. When the latter submitted to the Manchu conquerors, in 1635, the Ortous followed his example and were reunited to the empire as a tributary people.

The Emperor Khang-Hi resided for some time among the Ortous in 1696, when he was on his expedition against the Eleuts; and this is what he wrote of this people in a letter to the prince, his son, who had remained at Peking: "Till now I never had at all an accurate idea respecting the Ortous: they are a very civilized nation and have lost nothing of the old manners of the true Mongols. All their princes live in perfect union among themselves and do not know the difference between *mine* and *thine*. No one ever heard of a thief amongst them, although they take not the slightest precaution for guarding their camels and horses. If by chance one of these animals goes astray, it is taken care of by him who finds it till he has discovered its owner, to whom he restores it without the least payment. The Ortous are extremely skilful in breeding cattle; most of their horses are tame and tractable. The Tchakars, north of the Ortous, enjoy the reputation of training them with more care and success; nevertheless, I believe that the Ortous excel them in this point. Notwithstanding these advantages, they are not at all so rich as the other Mongols."

This quotation, which we take from the Abbé Grosier, is in every point conformable with what we ourselves were able to observe among the Ortus; so that since the time of the Emperor Khang-Hi this people has not at all changed in its manners.

The aspect of the country through which we travelled on the first day of our journey seemed affected by the vicinity of the Chinese fishermen who reside on the banks of the Yellow River. We saw here and there cultivated grounds, but there can be nothing more wretched and bare-looking than this cultivation, except, perhaps, the cultivator himself. These miserable agriculturists are a mixed people, half Chinese, half Tartars, but possessing neither the industry of the former, nor the frank and simple manners of the latter. They live in houses, or rather in dirty sheds built of branches intertwined, rudely covered with mud and cow's excrement. Thirst obliging us to enter one of these habitations to ask for some water, we were able to convince ourselves that the interior did not in any way contradict the misery which appeared outside. Men and animals live together higgledy-piggledy in these abodes, which are far inferior to those of the Mongols, where, at least, the air is not infected by the presence of cattle and sheep.

The sandy soil which is cultivated by these poor people, beyond a little buckwheat and millet, produces only hemp, but this is very large and abundant. Though when we were there the crop was already gathered in, we could nevertheless judge of the beauty of its stem from what remained in the fields. The farmers of Ortous do not pull up the hemp when it is ripe, as is done in China; they cut it off above the ground, so high as to leave a stump of about an inch in diameter. It was accordingly great toil for our camels to traverse those vast fields of hemp; the stumps, occurring at every step beneath their large feet, compelled them to execute all sorts of fantastic movements, which would

have excited our mirth had we not been fearful of seeing them wounded. However, that which so impeded our camels proved of great use to ourselves. When we had set up our tent, these stumps furnished us with a ready and abundant fuel.

We soon entered once more the Land of Grass, if, indeed, one can give this name to such a barren, arid country as that of the Ortous. Wherever you turn, you find only a soil bare and without verdure; rocky ravines, marly hills, and plains covered with a fine, moving sand, blown by the impetuous winds in every direction; for pasture you will only find a few thorny bushes and poor fern, dusty and fetid. At intervals only, this horrible soil produces some thin, sharp grass, so firm in the earth that the animals can only get it up by digging the sand with their muzzles. The numerous swamps which had been so heavy a desolation to us on the borders of the Yellow River became matter of regret in the country of the Ortous, so very rare here is water; not a single rivulet is there, not a spring, where the traveller can quench his thirst; at distances only are there ponds and cisterns, filled with a fetid, muddy water.

The lamas with whom we had been in communication at Blue Town had warned us of all the miseries we should have to endure in the country of the Ortous, especially on account of the scarcity of water. By their advice we had brought two wooden pails, which proved indeed of the greatest service to us. Whenever we were lucky enough to find on our way pools or wells dug by the Tartars, we filled our pails, without considering too nicely the quality of the water, which we used with the greatest economy, as if it had been some rare and precious beverage. In spite of all these precautions it happened more than once that we were obliged to pass whole days without getting a single drop of water wherewith to moisten our lips. But our personal privations were trifling

compared with the pain we felt at seeing our animals wanting water almost every day in a country where they had nothing to eat beyond a few plants nearly dried up and, as it were, calcined by nitre, and where they accordingly fell away visibly. After some days' travelling, the horse assumed a truly wretched appearance; it bent down its head and seemed at every step as though it would sink down with weakness; the camels painfully balanced themselves on their long legs, and their emaciated humps hung over their backs like empty bags.

The steppes of the Ortous, though so destitute of water and good pasture, have not been quite abandoned by wild animals. You often find there grey squirrels, agile yellow goats, and beautifully plumaged pheasants. Hares are in abundance and are so far from shy that they did not even take the trouble to move at our approach; they merely rose on their hind legs, pricked up their ears, and looked at us with the utmost indifference as we passed. The fact is, these animals feel perfectly secure, for, with the exception of a few Mongols who follow the chase, nobody ever molests them.

The herds of the Tartars of the Ortous are not very numerous and are quite different from those which feed on the rich pastures of the Tchakar or of Gechekten. The cattle and horses appeared very miserable; the goats, sheep, and camels, however, looked very well, which is undoubtedly the consequence of their predilection for plants impregnated with saltpetre, whereas cattle and horses prefer fresh pastures and pure and abundant water.

The Mongols of Ortous are very much affected by the wretchedness of the soil upon which they live. In the course of our journey we saw no indication that they had become much richer than they were in the time of the Emperor Khang-Hi. Most of them live in tents made of some rags of felt, or of goatskins framed on a wretched woodwork.

Everything about these tents is so old and dirty, so tattered with time and storms, that you would with difficulty suppose they could serve as abodes for human beings. Whenever we happened to pitch our tent near these poor habitations, we were sure to be visited by a crowd of wretches who prostrated themselves at our feet, rolled on the earth, and gave us the most magnificent titles, in order to extract something from our charity.

Social Classes among the Tartars. Slavery.

Anyone not acquainted with the laws by which the Tartars are ruled would not readily understand why men condemn themselves to spend their lives in the wretched country of the Ortoos whilst Mongolia presents, in every direction, immense uninhabited plains where water and pasture are to be found in abundance. Although the Tartars are nomads, and incessantly wandering about from one place to another, they are, nevertheless, not at liberty to live in any other country than their own. They are bound to remain in their own kingdom, under the dominion of their own sovereign, for slavery is still maintained among the Mongol tribes with the utmost rigour.

In Tartary all the families that are in any way related to the sovereign form a nobility, or a patrician caste, who are proprietors of the whole soil. The Tartars who do not belong to the royal family are all slaves, living in absolute subjection to their masters. Besides the rents they pay, they are bound to keep their master's flocks and herds, but they are not forbidden to breed also cattle on their own account. It would be a fallacy to imagine that slavery in Tartary is oppressive and cruel, as amongst some nations; the noble families scarcely differ from the slave families. In examining the relations between them, it would be difficult to distinguish the master from the slave: they live both alike in tents, and both alike

occupy their lives in pasturing their flocks. You will never find among them luxury and opulence insolently staring in the face of poverty. When the slave enters his master's tent, the latter never fails to offer him tea and milk; they smoke together and exchange their pipes. Around the tents the young slaves and the young noblemen romp and wrestle together without distinction; the stronger throws the weaker; that is all. You often find families of slaves becoming proprietors of numerous flocks and spending their days in abundance. We met many who were richer than their masters, a circumstance giving no umbrage to the latter.

A Theologic Dispute. Vexation of a Lama.

After some days' march across the sands of the Ortous, we noticed on our way a small lamasery, richly built in a picturesque and wild situation. We passed on without stopping. We had advanced a gunshot from the place when we heard behind us the galloping of a horse. On looking round we saw a lama following us at full speed. "Brothers," he said, "you have passed our *soumé* (lamasery) without stopping. Are you in such haste that you cannot repose for a day and offer your adorations to our saint?" "Yes, we are rather in a hurry; our journey is not of a few days; we are going to the West." "I knew very well by your physiognomies that you were not Mongols and that you came from the West; but as you are going so far, you had better prostrate yourselves before our saint; that will bring you good luck." "We never prostrate ourselves before men; the true creed of the West forbids that." "Our saint is not a mere man; you do not imagine, perhaps, that in our little lamasery we have the happiness to possess a *Chaberon*, a living Buddha. It is two years since he deigned to descend from the holy mountains of Thibet; he is now seven years old. In one of his former lives he was Grand Lama of a splendid lamasery in this vale,

which was destroyed, according to the prayer-books, in the time of the wars of Jenghiz. The saint having reappeared a few years since, we have constructed in haste a small lamasery. Come, brothers, our saint will hold his right hand over your heads, and luck will accompany your steps! ” “ The men who know the holy doctrine of the West do not believe in all these transmigrations of the *Chaberons*. We adore only the Creator of heaven and earth; his name is Jehovah. We believe that the child you have made superior of your lamasery is destitute of all power. Men have nothing to hope or to fear from him.” When the lama heard these words, which he certainly never expected, he was quite stupefied. By degrees his face became animated, and at last exhibited indignation and anger. He looked at us several times; then, pulling the bridle of his horse, he turned short round and left us hastily, muttering between his teeth some words which we could not exactly hear, but which we were aware did not constitute a benediction.

Election of a Living Buddha.

The Tartars believe with firm and absolute faith in all these various transmigrations. They would never allow themselves to entertain the slightest doubt as to the authenticity of their *Chaberons*. These living Buddhas are in large numbers, and are always placed at the head of the most important lamaseries. Sometimes they modestly begin their career in a small temple and have only a few disciples; but very soon their reputation increases around, and the small lamasery becomes a place of pilgrimage and devotion. The neighbouring lamas, speculating upon the rising fashion, surround it with their cells; the lamasery acquires development from year to year and becomes at last famous in the land.

The election and enthronization of the living Buddhas are conducted in so singular a manner as to be well worth re-

lating. When a Grand Lama has gone — that is to say, is dead — the circumstance is no occasion of mourning in the lamasery. There are no tears, no lamentations, for everybody knows the *Chaberon* will very soon reappear. This apparent death is but the beginning of a new existence, as it were, one ring more added to the unlimited, uninterrupted chain of successive lives — a regular palingenesis. While the saint is in a state of chrysalis, his disciples are in the greatest anxiety; for it is their most important affair to discover the place where their master will resume life. A rainbow appearing in the air is considered a signal sent to them by their old Great Lama to aid them in their research. Everyone thereupon says his prayers, and while the lamasery which has lost its Buddha redoubles its fastings and prayers, a troop of elect proceeds to consult the *Tchurtchun*, or augur, famous for the knowledge of things hidden from the common herd. He is informed that on such a day of such a moon the rainbow of the *Chaberon* has manifested itself on the sky; it made its appearance in such a place; it was more or less luminous, and it was visible so long; then it disappeared amid such and such circumstances. When the *Tchurtchun* has received all the necessary indications, he recites some prayers, opens his books of divination, and pronounces at last his oracle, while the Tartars who have come to consult him listen, kneeling and full of unction. “Your Great Lama,” says he, “has reappeared in Thibet, at such a distance from your lamasery. You will find him in such a family.” When these poor Mongols have heard this oracle, they return full of joy to announce the glad tidings to their lamasery.

It often happens that the disciples of the defunct have no occasion to trouble themselves at all in order to discover the new birthplace of their Great Lama. He himself takes the trouble to initiate them into the secret of his transformation. As soon as he has effected his metamorphosis in Thibet,

he reveals himself at an age when common children cannot yet articulate a single word. "It is I," he says with the accent of authority; "it is I who am the Great Lama, the living Buddha of such a temple; conduct me to my ancient lamasery. I am its immortal superior." The wonderful baby having thus spoken, it is speedily communicated to the lamas of the *soumé* indicated that their *Chaberon* is born in such a place, and they are summoned to attend and invite him home.

In whatever manner the Tartars discover the residence of their Great Lama, whether by the appearance of the rainbow, or by the spontaneous revelation of the *Chaberon* himself, they are always full of intense joy on the occasion. Soon all is movement in the tents, and the thousand preparations for a long journey are made with enthusiasm, for it is almost always in Thibet that they have to seek their living Buddha, who seldom fails to play them the trick of transmigrating in some remote and almost inaccessible country. Everyone contributes his share to the organization of the holy journey. If the king of the country does not place himself at the head of the caravan, he sends either his own son or one of the most illustrious members of the royal family. The great mandarins, or ministers of the king, consider it their duty and an honour to join the party. When everything is at last prepared, an auspicious day is chosen, and the caravan starts.

Sometimes these poor Mongols, after having endured incredible fatigues in horrible deserts, fall into the hands of the brigands of the Blue Sea, who strip them from head to foot. If they do not die of hunger and cold in those dreadful solitudes — if they succeed in returning to the place whence they came — they commence the preparations for a new journey. There is nothing capable of discouraging them. At last, when, by dint of energy and perseverance, they have contrived to reach the eternal sanctuary, they prostrate them-

selves before the child who has been indicated to them. The young *Chaberon*, however, is not saluted and proclaimed Great Lama without a previous examination. There is held a solemn sitting, at which the new living Buddha is examined publicly, with a scrupulous attention. He is asked the name of the lamasery of which he assumes to be the Great Lama; at what distance it is; what is the number of the lamas residing in it. He is interrogated respecting the habits and customs of the defunct Great Lama and the principal circumstances attending his death. After all these questions, there are placed before him different prayer-books, articles of furniture, tea-pots, cups, &c., and amongst all these things he has to point out those which belonged to his former life.

Generally this child, at most but five or six years old, comes forth victorious out of all these trials. He answers accurately all the questions that are put to him and makes without any embarrassment the inventory of his goods. "Here," he says, "are the prayer-books I used; there is the janned porringer out of which I drank my tea." And so on.

No doubt the Mongols are often dupes of the fraud of those who have an interest in making a Great Lama out of this puppet. Yet we believe that often all this proceeds on both sides with honesty and good faith. From the information we obtained from persons worthy of the greatest credit, it appears certain that all that is said of the *Chabérons* must not be ranged amongst illusion and deception. A purely human philosophy will, undoubtedly, reject such things, or put them, without hesitating, down to the account of lama imposture. We Catholic missionaries believe that the great liar who once deceived our first parents in the earthly paradise still pursues his system of falsehood in the world. He who had the power to hold up in the air Simon Magus may well at this day speak to mankind by the mouth of an infant, in order to maintain the faith of his adorers.

When the titles of the living Buddha have been confirmed, he is conducted in triumph to the lamasery, of which he is to be the Grand Lama. Upon the road he takes, all is excitement, all is movement. The Tartars assemble in large crowds to prostrate themselves on his way, and to present to him their offerings. As soon as he is arrived at his lamasery, he is placed upon the altar; and then kings, princes, mandarins, lamas, Tartars, from the richest to the poorest, come and bend the head before this child, which has been brought from the depths of Thibet, at enormous expense, and whose demoniac possessions excite everybody's respect, admiration, and enthusiasm.

Organization of a Lamasery. Education by Blows. Canonic Books.

There is no Tartar kingdom which does not possess in one of its lamaseries of the first class a living Buddha. Besides this superior there is always another Grand Lama, who is selected from the members of the royal family. The Thibetian lama resides in the lamasery, like a living idol, receiving every day the adorations of the devout, upon whom in return he bestows his blessing. Everything which relates to prayers and liturgical ceremonies is placed under his immediate superintendence. The Mongol Grand Lama is charged with the administration, good order, and executive of the lamasery; he governs whilst his colleague is content to reign.

Below these two sovereigns are several subaltern officers, who direct the details of the administration, the revenues, the sales, the purchases, and the discipline. The scribes keep the registers and draw up the regulations and orders which the governor lama promulgates for the good keeping and order of the lamasery. These scribes are generally well versed in the Mongol, Thibetian, and sometimes in the Chinese and Manchu languages. Before they are admitted to this employment, they are obliged to undergo a very rigorous ex-

amination, in presence of all the lamas and of the principal civil authorities of the country.

After this staff of superiors and officers, the inhabitants of the lamasery are divided in lama-masters and lama-disciples, or *chabis*; each lama has under his direction one or more *chabis*, who live in his small house and execute all the details of the household. If the master possesses cattle, they take charge of them, milk the cows, and prepare the butter and cream. In return for these services, the master directs his disciples in the study of the prayers and initiates them into the liturgy. Every morning the *chabi* must be up before his master; his first task is to sweep the chamber, to light a fire, and to make the tea; after that he takes his prayer-book, presents it respectfully to his master, and prostrates himself thrice before him, without saying a single word. This sign of respect is equivalent to a request that the lesson he has to learn in the course of the day may be marked. The master opens the book and reads some pages, according to the capacity of his scholar, who then makes three more prostrations in sign of thanks, and returns to his affairs.

The *chabi* studies his prayer-book when he is disposed to do so, there being no fixed period for that; he may spend his time sleeping or romping with the other young pupils, without the slightest interference on the part of his master. When the hour for retiring to bed has arrived, he recites the lesson assigned him in the morning, in a monotonous manner; if the recitation is good, he is looked upon as having done his duty, the silence of his master being the only praise he is entitled to obtain; if, on the contrary, he is not able to give a good account of his lesson, the severest punishment makes him sensible of his fault. It often happens that under such circumstances the master, laying aside his usual gravity, rushes upon his scholar and overwhelms him at once with blows and terrible maledictions. Some of the pupils who are

over-maltreated run away and seek adventures far from their lamasery; but in general they patiently submit to the punishment inflicted on them, even that of passing the night in the open air, without any clothes and in full winter. We often had opportunities of talking with *chabis*, and when we asked them whether there was no means of learning the prayers without being beaten, they ingenuously, and with an accent manifesting entire conviction, replied that it was impossible. "The prayers one knows best," they said, "are always those for which one has got most blows. The lamas who cannot recite prayers, or cure maladies, or tell fortunes, or predict the future, are those who have not been beaten well by their masters."

Besides these studies, which are conducted at home, and under the immediate superintendence of the master, the *chabis* may attend, in the lamasery, public lectures, wherein the books which relate to religion and to medicine are expounded. But these commentaries are mostly vague, unsatisfactory, and quite inadequate to form learned lamas; there are few of them who can give an exact account of the books they study; to justify their omission in this respect, they never fail to allege the profundity of the doctrine. As to the great majority of the lamas, they think it more convenient and expeditious to recite the prayers in a merely mechanical way, without giving themselves any trouble about the ideas they contain.

The Thibetian books alone being reputed canonical, and admitted as such by the Buddhist reformation, the Mongol lamas pass their lives in studying a foreign idiom, without troubling themselves at all about their own language. There are many of them well versed in the Thibetian literature who do not even know their own Mongol alphabet. There are indeed a few lamaseries where the study of the Tartarian idiom receives some slight attention, and where they

sometimes recite Mongo. prayers, but these are always a translation of Thibetian books. A lama who can read Thibetian and Mongol is reputed quite a savant; he is thought a being raised above mankind if he has some knowledge of Chinese and Manchu literature.

A Torrential Storm. Cold. Refuge in a Cave.

As we advanced in the Ortous, the country seemed more and more desert and dismal. To make matters still worse, a terrible storm, solemnly closing in the autumn season, brought upon us the cold of winter. One day we were proceeding with difficulty through the arid sandy desert; the perspiration ran down our foreheads, for the heat was stifling; we felt overpowered by the closeness of the atmosphere, and our camels, with outstretched necks and mouths half open, vainly sought in the air a breath of cooling freshness. Towards noon dark clouds began to gather in the horizon; fearful of being surprised by the storm, we determined to pitch our tent. But where? We looked round on all sides; we ascended to the tops of the hillocks and anxiously sought with our eyes for some Tartar habitation, which might provide us with fuel; but in vain; we had before us on all sides nothing but a mournful solitude. From time to time we saw the foxes retiring to their holes, and herds of yellow goats running to take repose in the defiles of the mountains. Meantime the clouds continued to rise and the wind began to blow violently. In the irregularity of its gusts it seemed now to bring us the tempest, now to drive it from us. While we were thus suspended between hope and fear, loud claps of thunder, and repeated flashes of lightning that seemed to enkindle the sky, gave us notice that we had no other resource than to place ourselves entirely in the hands of Providence. The icy north wind blowing fiercely, we directed our steps to a defile which opened near us; but before we had time to reach it, the storm

exploded. At first, rain fell in torrents, then hail, and at last snow, half melted. In an instant we were wet through to the skin and felt the cold seizing upon our limbs. We immediately alighted, hoping that walking would warm us a little, but we had hardly advanced ten steps amidst the deluge of sand when our legs sank as in mortar. When we found it impossible to go any farther, we sought shelter by the side of our camels, and crouched down, pressing our arms closely against our sides in order to attain, if possible, a little warmth.

While the storm continued to hurl against us its fury, we awaited with resignation the fate which Providence destined for us. It was impossible to pitch the tent; it was beyond human power to spread cloth saturated with rain and half frozen by the north wind. Besides, it would have been difficult to find a site for it, since the water streamed in every direction. Amid circumstances so dreadful, we looked at each other in sadness and in silence; we felt the natural warmth of our bodies diminishing every minute, and our blood beginning to freeze. We offered, therefore, the sacrifice of our lives to God, for we were convinced that we should die of cold during the night.

One of us, however, collecting all his strength and all his energy, climbed up an eminence which commanded a view of the contiguous defile, and discovered a foot-path leading by a thousand sinuosities into the depths of the immense ravine; he pursued its direction and, after a few steps in the hollow, perceived in the sides of the mountain large openings, like doors. At this sight recovering at once his courage and his strength, he ascended once more the eminence in order to communicate the good news to his companions. "We are saved," he cried; "there are caves in this defile; let us hasten to take refuge in them." These words immediately aroused the little caravan; we left our animals upon the hill and speedily descended into the ravine. A foot-path led to

the opening; we advanced our heads and discovered in the interior of the mountain, not simple caves formed by nature, but fine, spacious apartments excavated by the hand of man. Our first exclamation was an expression of thankfulness for the goodness of Providence. We selected the cleanest and largest of these caverns and in an instant passed from the utmost misery to the height of felicity. It was like a sudden and unhoped-for transition from death to life.

On viewing these subterranean dwellings, constructed with so much elegance and solidity, we were of opinion that some Chinese families had repaired to this country to cultivate the soil; but that, repelled by its barrenness, they had given up their enterprise. Traces of cultivation, which we perceived here and there, confirmed our conjecture. When the Chinese establish themselves anywhere in Tartary, if they find mountains the earth of which is hard and solid, they excavate caverns in their sides. These habitations are cheaper than houses, and less exposed to the irregularity of the seasons. They are generally very well laid out; on each side of the door there are windows giving sufficient light to the interior; the walls, the ceiling, the furnaces, the *kang*, everything inside is so coated with plaster, so firm and shining, that it has the appearance of stucco. These caves have the advantage of being very warm in winter and very cool in summer; the want of sufficient air, however, sometimes makes a sojourn in them dangerous to the health. Those dwellings were no novelty to us, for they abound in our mission of Si-Wan. However, we had never seen any so well constructed as these of the Ortous.

We took possession of one of those subterranean abodes and commenced proceedings by making a large fire in the furnaces, with plentiful bundles of hemp stems which we found in one of the caves. Never on our journey had we at our disposal such excellent fuel. Our clothes dried very soon,

and we were so happy at being in this fine hotel of Providence that we spent the greater part of the night enjoying the delightful sensation of warmth, while Samdadchiemba was never tired of broiling little cakes in mutton fat. It was altogether quite a festival with us, and our flour felt somewhat the effects of it.

The animals were not less happy than we. We found for them stables out in the mountain, and, which was better still, excellent forage. One cave was filled with millet stems and oat-straw. But for this horrible storm, which had nearly killed us, our animals would never have got so grand a treat. After having for a long time enjoyed the poetry of our miraculous position we yielded to the necessity of taking repose, and lay down upon a well-warmed *kang*, which made us forget the terrible cold we had endured during the tempest.

The Unexpected Neighbour. Insolence of the Sparrows. A Drama near the Caves. A Mongol Marriage.

Next morning, while Samdadchiemba was using the rest of the hemp stems and drying our baggage, we went out for a nearer inspection of these numerous subterraneans. We had scarcely gone ten steps when we beheld, to our great astonishment, whirls of smoke issuing from the door and windows of a cave adjoining our own. As we fancied we were alone in the desert, the sight of this smoke excited a surprise mingled with fear. We directed our steps to the opening of the cavern, and, on reaching the threshold of the door, perceived within a large fire of hemp stems, whose undulating flame reached the ceiling, so that the place looked like an oven. On further investigation we observed a human form moving amidst the thick smoke; we soon heard the Tartar salute, *Mendou!* uttered by a sonorous voice; "Come and sit beside this fire." We did not like to advance. This cave of Cacus,

that loud voice, presented to our minds something fantastic. Finding that we remained silent and motionless, the inhabitant of this sort of vent-hole of Erebus rose and came to the threshold. He was neither a devil nor a ghost, but simply a Mongol Tartar, who, the night before, having been surprised by the storm, had fled to this cave, where he had passed the night. After a few words about the rain, wind, and hail we invited him to breakfast with us and brought him to our dwelling. While Samdadchiemba, aided by our guest, made the tea, we went out again to pursue our researches.

We walked amid these deserted and silent abodes with a curiosity not free from terror. All were constructed upon much the same model, and still preserved their pristine integrity. Chinese characters engraved on the walls, and pieces of porcelain vases, confirmed our impression that these caves had been inhabited not long since by Chinese. Some woman's old shoes, which we discovered in a corner, removed any remaining doubt. We could not shake off a feeling of sadness and melancholy when we thought of those numerous families who, after having lived a long time in the entrails of this large mountain, had gone elsewhere to seek a more hospitable soil.

As we entered the caves, we alarmed flocks of sparrows, which had not yet left these former dwellings of man, but had, on the contrary, boldly taken possession of these grand nests. The millet and oats, strewn around profusely, induced them to remain. "Undoubtedly," said we, "they too will fly away when they no longer find here any more grains, when they find that the old inhabitants of these caves return no more, and they will seek hospitality under the roofs of houses."

The sparrow is a regular cosmopolite; we have found it wherever we have found man; ever with the same vivid, petulant, quarrelsome character; ever with the same sharp,

angry cry. It is, however, to be remarked that in Tartary, China, and Thibet it is, perhaps, more insolent than in Europe; because there nobody makes war upon it, and its nest and brood are piously respected. You see it boldly enter the house, live there on familiar terms, and peck up at its leisure the remnants of man's food. The Chinese call it *kio-niao-eul* (bird of the family).

After having inspected about thirty of these caves, which did not present anything remarkable, we returned to our own. At breakfast the conversation naturally turned upon the Chinese who had excavated these dwellings. We asked the Tartar if he had seen them. "What!" said he, "have I seen the Kitats who inhabited this defile? Why, I knew all of them; it is not more than two years since they left the country. For that matter," he added, "they had no right to remain here; as they were rascals, it was quite proper to turn them out." "Rascals, say you? why, what mischief could they do in this wretched ravine?" "Oh, the Kitats are sly, cheating fellows. At first they seemed very good, but that did not last long. It is more than twenty years ago that a few of their families sought our hospitality; as they were poor, they got permission to cultivate some land in the vicinity, on condition that every year after harvest they should furnish some oatmeal to the Taitsi of the country. By degrees, other families arrived, who also excavated caverns wherein to dwell, and soon this defile was full of them. In the beginning these Kitats showed a gentle, quiet character; we lived together like brothers. Tell me, Sirs Lamas, is it not well to live together like brothers? Are not all men brothers?" "Yes, that is true; you speak the words of justice; but why did these Kitats go hence?" "Peace did not last long! they soon showed themselves wicked and false. Instead of being content with what had been given them, they extended their cultivation at their pleasure, and took possession of a large territory, without

asking anyone's leave. When they were rich, they would not pay the oatmeal they had agreed to pay as tribute. Every year, when we claimed the rent, we were received with insults and maledictions. But the worst thing was that these rascally Kitats turned thieves and took possession of all the goats and sheep that lost their way in the sinuosities of the ravine. At last a Taitsi of great courage and capacity called together the Mongols of the neighbourhood and said: 'The Kitats take away our land, they steal our beasts, and curse us; as they do not act or speak as brothers, we must expel them.' Everybody was pleased with these words of the old Taitsi. After a deliberation it was decided that the principal men of the country should go to the king and supplicate an order condemning the Kitats to be expelled. I was one of the deputation. The king reproached us for having permitted foreigners to cultivate our lands; we prostrated ourselves before him, observing profound silence. However, the king, who always acts with justice, had the order written, and sealed with his red seal. The ordinance said that the king would not permit the Kitats to live any longer in the country, and that they must leave it before the first day of the eighth moon. Three Taitsi rode off to present the ordinance to the Kitats. They made no answer to the three deputies, but said amongst themselves: 'The king desires us to go; very well.'

"Afterwards we learned that they had assembled and had resolved to disobey the orders of the king and to remain in the country in spite of him. The first day of the eighth moon arrived, and they still occupied calmly their habitations, without making any preparation for departure. In the morning, before day-break, all the Tartars mounted their horses, armed themselves with their lances, and drove their flocks and herds upon the cultivated lands of the Kitats, on which the crop was still standing: when the sun rose, nothing of that crop was left. All had been devoured by the animals or

trodden down. The Kitats yelled and cursed us, but the thing was done. Seeing that their position was desperate, they collected, the same day, their furniture and agricultural implements, and went off to settle in the eastern parts of the Ortous, at some distance from the Yellow River, near the Paga-Gol. As you came through Tchagan-Kouren, you must have met on your route, west of the Paga-Gol, Kitats cultivating some pieces of land; well, it was they who inhabited this defile and excavated all these caves."

Having finished his narrative, the Tartar went out for a moment and brought back a small packet, which he had left in the cavern where he had passed the night. "Sirs Lamas," he said on his return, "I must depart; but will you not come and repose for a few days in my dwelling? My tent is not far hence; it is behind that sandy mountain which you perceive there towards the north. It is at the utmost not more than thirty *lis* off." "We are much obliged to you," answered we. "The hospitality of the Mongols of Ortous is known everywhere, but we have a long journey before us; we cannot stop on our way." "What are a few days sooner or later in a long journey? Your beasts cannot always be on their feet; they need a little rest. You yourselves have had much to endure from the weather of yesterday. Come with me; all will then be well. In four days we shall have a festival. My eldest son is going to establish a family. Come to the nuptials of my son; your presence will bring good fortune." The Tartar, seeing us inflexible, mounted his horse and, after having ascended the pathway which led to the defile, disappeared across the heath and sand of the desert.

Under other circumstances we should have accepted with pleasure the offer thus made, but we desired to make the shortest possible stay amongst the Ortous. We were anxious to leave behind us that miserable country, where our animals were wasting away daily and where we had ourselves

met with such fatigue and misery. Besides, a Mongol wedding was no new thing to us. Since we had entered Tartary, we had witnessed more than once ceremonies of that kind.

The Mongols marry very young, and always under the influence of the absolute authority of the parents. This affair, so grave and important, is initiated, discussed, and concluded without the two persons most interested in it taking the least part in it. Whatever promises of marriage may take place in youth or at more advanced age, it is the parents who always settle the contract, without even speaking to their children about it. The two future consorts do not know, perhaps never saw each other. It is only when they are married that they have the opportunity to inquire whether there is sympathy between their characters or not.

The daughter never brings any marriage portion. On the contrary, the young man has to make presents to the family of his bride; and the value of these presents is seldom left to the generosity of the husband's parents. Everything is arranged beforehand and set forth in a public document, with the minutest details. In fact, the matter is less a marriage present than the price of an object sold by one party and bought by the other. The thing is indeed very clearly expressed in their language; they say: "I have bought for my son the daughter of so and so." "We have sold our daughter to such and such a family." The marriage contract is thus simply a contract of sale. There are mediators, who bargain and haggle, up and down, till at last they come to an agreement. When it is settled how many horses, oxen, sheep, pieces of linen, pounds of butter, what quantity of brandy and wheat flour, shall be given to the family of the bride, the contract is at length drawn up before witnesses, and the daughter becomes the property of the purchaser. She remains, however, with her family till the time of the nuptial ceremonies.

When the marriage has been concluded between the mediators, the father of the bridegroom, accompanied by his nearest relations, carries the news to the family of the bride. On entering they prostrate themselves before the little domestic altar and offer to the idol of Buddha a boiled sheep's-head, milk, and a sash of white silk. Then they partake of a repast provided by the parents of the bridegroom. During the repast all the relations of the bride receive a piece of money, which they deposit in a vase filled with wine made of fermented milk. The father of the bride drinks the wine and keeps the money. This ceremony is called *Tahil-Tébihou*, "striking the bargain."

The day indicated by the lamas as auspicious for the marriage having arrived, the bridegroom sends early in the morning a deputation to fetch the girl who has been betrothed to him, or rather whom he has bought. When the envoys draw near, the relations and friends of the bride place themselves in a circle before the door, as if to oppose the departure of the bride, and then begins a feigned fight, which of course terminates with the bride's being carried off. She is placed on a horse, and, having been thrice led round her paternal house, she is then taken at full gallop to the tent which has been prepared for the purpose, near the dwelling of her father-in-law. Meantime all the Tartars of the neighbourhood, the relations and friends of both families, repair to the wedding-feast and offer their presents to the new married pair. The extent of these presents, which consist of beasts and eatables, is left to the generosity of the guests. They are destined for the father of the bridegroom and often fully indemnify him for his expenses in the purchase of the bride. As the offered animals come up, they are taken into folds ready constructed for them. At the weddings of rich Tartars these large folds receive great herds of oxen, horses,

and sheep. Generally the guests are generous enough, for they know that they will be paid in return, upon a similar occasion.

When the bride has finished dressing, she is introduced to her father-in-law; and while the assembled lamas recite the prayers prescribed by the ritual, she first prostrates herself before the image of Buddha, then before the hearth, and lastly before the father, mother, and other near relatives of the bridegroom, who, on his part, performs the same ceremonies towards the family of his bride, assembled in an adjacent tent. Then comes the wedding-feast, which sometimes continues for seven or eight days. An excessive profusion of fat meat, infinite tobacco, and large jars of brandy constitute the splendour and magnificence of these repasts. Sometimes music is added to the entertainment, and they invite Toolholos, or Tartar singers, to give more solemnity to the festival.

Condition of the Mongol Women. Polygamy. Divorce. The Feminine Costume.

The plurality of wives is admitted in Tartary, being opposed neither to the laws, nor to the religion, nor to the manners of the country. The first wife is always the mistress of the household, and the most respected in the family. The other wives bear the name of little spouses (*paga éme*), and owe obedience and respect to the first.

Polygamy, abolished by the gospel, and contrary in itself to the happiness and concord of families, may, perhaps, be regarded as a blessing to the Tartars. Considering the present state of society with them, it is, as it were, a barrier opposed to libertinism and corruption of morals. Celibacy being imposed on the lamas, and the class of those who shave the head and live in lamaseries being so numerous, it is

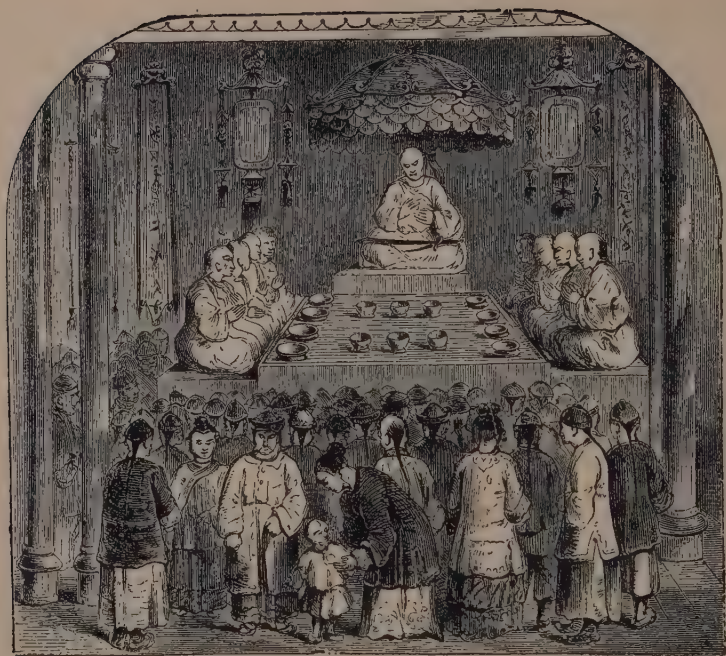
easy to conceive what disorders would arise from this multiplication of young women without support and abandoned to themselves if girls could not be placed in families in the quality of second wives.

Divorce is very frequent among the Tartars. It takes place without any participation of the civil or ecclesiastical authorities. The husband who repudiates his wife has not even occasion for a pretext to justify his conduct. He sends her back, without any formality, to her parents, and contents himself with a message that he does not require her any longer. This proceeding is in accordance with Tartar manners, and does not offend anyone. The husband thinks himself entitled to the privilege in consideration of the oxen, sheep, and horses he was obliged to give as nuptial presents. The parents of the repudiated wife do not complain at having their daughter back; she resumes her place in the family till another husband presents himself, in which case they even rejoice over the profit they make by thus selling the same merchandise twice over.

In Tartary the women lead an independent life enough. They are far from being oppressed and kept in servitude, as with other Asiatic nations. They may come and go at their pleasure, ride out on horseback, and pay each other visits from tent to tent. Instead of the soft, languishing physiognomy of the Chinese women, the Tartar woman presents in her bearing and manners a power and force well in accordance with her active life and nomad habits, and her attire augments the effect of her masculine, haughty mien.

Large leather boots and a long green or violet robe fastened round the waist by a black or blue girdle constitute her dress, except that sometimes she wears over the great robe a small coat, resembling in form our waistcoats, but very large and coming down to the hips. The hair of the Tartar women is divided in two tresses, tied up in taffetas and hang-

ing down upon the bosom; their luxury consists in ornamenting the girdle and hair with spangles of gold and silver, pearls, coral, and a thousand other toys, the form and quality of which it would be difficult for us to define, as we had neither opportunity, nor taste, nor patience to pay serious attention to these futilities.



BARBAROUS LAMANESQUE CEREMONY.

CHAPTER VIII

THE Tartar who had just taken his leave had informed us that at a short distance from the caverns we should find in a vale the finest pasturages in the whole country of the Ortous. We resolved to depart. It was near noon already when we started. The sky was clear, the sun brilliant; but the temperature, still affected by the storm of the preceding day, was cold and sharp. After having travelled for nearly two hours over a sandy soil, deeply furrowed by the streams of rain, we entered, on a sudden, a valley whose smiling, fertile aspect singularly contrasted with all that we had hitherto seen among the Ortous. In the centre flowed an abundant rivulet. whose sources were lost in the sand; and on both

sides, the hills, which rose like an amphitheatre, were covered with pasturage and clumps of shrubs.

Though it was still early, we gave up all idea of continuing our journey that day. The place was too beautiful to be passed by; besides, the north wind had risen, and the air became intolerably cold. We pitched out tent, therefore, in a corner sheltered by the hills. From the interior of the tent our view extended, without obstruction, down the valley, and we were thus enabled to watch our animals without moving.

After sunset the violence of the wind increased, and the cold became more and more intense. We thought it advisable to take some measures of security. Whilst Samdadchiemba piled up large stones to consolidate the borders of the tent, we went about the adjacent hills and made, by aid of a hatchet, an abundant provision of fuel. As soon as we had taken our tea and our daily broth, we went to sleep. But sleep did not last long; the cold became so severe that it soon roused us. "We can't remain so," said the Dchiahour; "if we don't want to die of cold on our goatskins, we must get up and make a large fire." Samdadchiemba's words were full of sense; it was not advisable to sleep at such a time, and accordingly we rose and added to our usual dress the great sheepskin robes that we had bought at Blue Town.

Our fire of roots and green branches was hardly lighted when we felt our eyes, as it were, calcined by the biting acid influence of a thick smoke which filled the tent. We opened the door; but as this gave admission to the wind without getting rid of the smoke, we were soon obliged to shut it again. Samdadchiemba was not in any way molested by the thick smoke, which stifled us and drew burning tears from our eyes. He laughed without pity at seeing us crouched by the fire, our heads bending over our knees, and our faces buried in both hands. "My spiritual fathers," he said, "your

eyes are large and bright, but they cannot endure a little smoke; mine are small and ugly, but, never mind, they perform their service very well." The jests of our camel-driver were not much adapted to cheer us up; we suffered dreadfully. Yet, amid our tribulations, we saw occasion to feel our happiness to be very great. We could not reflect without gratitude upon the goodness of Providence, which had led us to caves, whose great value we now fully appreciated. If we had not been able to dry our clothes, if we had been surprised by the cold in the piteous state in which the storm had left us, we certainly could not have lived long; we should have been frozen with our clothes in one immovable block.

From Arctic Cold to the Warmth of Spring.

We did not think it prudent to proceed amid such severe cold, and to leave an encampment where at least our animals got sufficient herbage to browse upon and where fuel was abundant. Towards noon, the weather having grown milder, we went out to cut wood on the hills. On our way we observed that our animals had left the pasturage and collected on the banks of the rivulet. We at once conceived that they were tormented by thirst and that, the stream being frozen, they could not quench it. We bent our steps to them and found, in fact, the camels eagerly licking the surface of the ice, while the horse and the mule were kicking upon it with their hard hoofs. The hatchet we had brought with us to cut wood served to break the ice and to dig a small pond, where our animals could quench their thirst.

Towards evening, the cold having resumed its intensity, we adopted a plan for enabling us to obtain a better sleep than we had in the preceding night. Until morning the time was divided into three watches, and each of us was charged in turns with keeping up a large fire in the tent, while the others slept. Thus we did not feel much of the cold and slept in peace, without fear of setting our linen house on fire.

After two days of horrible cold the wind abated, and we resolved to proceed on our way. It was only with great difficulty that we got down our tent. The first nail that we tried to draw out broke like glass under the hammer. The sandy, humid soil on which we had made our encampment was so frozen that the nails stuck in it as if they had been encrusted in stone. To uproot them we were obliged to wet them several times with boiling water.

At the time of our departure the temperature was so mild that we were fain to take off our skin coats and to pack them up until further occasion. Nothing is more frequent in Tartary than these sudden changes of temperature. Sometimes the mildest weather is abruptly followed by the most horrible frost. All that is needed for this is the falling of snow and the subsequent rise of the north wind. Anyone not inured to these sudden changes of the atmosphere and not provided, in travelling, with well-furred robes is often exposed to dreadful accidents. In the north of Mongolia especially, it is not unusual to find travellers frozen to death amidst the desert.

A Lama who Cuts Open His Abdomen.

On the fifteenth day of the new moon we came upon numerous caravans, following, like ourselves, the direction from east to west. The road was filled with men, women, and children, riding on camels or oxen. They were all repairing, they said, to the Lamasery of Rache-Tchurin. When they had asked whether our journey had the same object, they were surprised at receiving an answer in the negative. These numerous pilgrims, the astonishment they showed upon hearing that we were not going to the Lamasery of Rache-Tchurin, excited our curiosity. At the turn of a defile we overtook an old lama, who, laden with a heavy pack, seemed to make his way with great labour and pain. "Brother," said we, "you are old; your black hairs are not so numerous as the grey. Doubtless your fatigue must be

extreme. Place your burden upon one of our camels; that will relieve you a little." Upon hearing these words the old man prostrated himself before us, in order to express his gratitude. We made a camel kneel, and Samdadchiemba added to our baggage that of the lama. So soon as the pilgrim was relieved from the weight which had oppressed him, his walk became more elastic, and an expression of satisfaction was diffused over his countenance. "Brother," said we, "we are from the West, and the affairs of your country not being well known to us, we are astonished at finding so many pilgrims here in the desert." "We are all going to Rache-Tchurin," replied he, in accents full of emotion. "Doubtless," said we, "some grand solemnity calls you together?" "Yes, tomorrow will be a great day; a lama *Boktè* will manifest his power: kill himself, yet not die." We at once understood what solemnity it was that thus attracted the Ortous-Tartars. A lama was to cut himself open, take out his entrails and place them before him, and then resume his previous condition. This spectacle, so cruel and disgusting, is very common in the lamaseries of Tartary. The *Boktè* who is to manifest his power, as the Mongols phrase it, prepares himself for the formidable operation by many days' fasting and prayer, pending which he must abstain from all communication whatever with mankind and observe the most absolute silence. When the appointed day is come, the multitude of pilgrims assemble in the great court of the lamasery, where an altar is raised in front of the temple gate. At length the *Boktè* appears. He advances gravely, amid the acclamations of the crowd, seats himself upon the altar, and takes from his girdle a large knife, which he places upon his knees. At his feet numerous lamas, ranged in a circle, commence the terrible invocations of this frightful ceremony. As the recitation of the prayers proceeds, you see the *Boktè* trembling in every limb and gradually working himself up into phren-

etic convulsions. The lamas themselves become excited; their voices are raised; their song observes no order and at last becomes a mere confusion of yelling and outcry. Then the *Boktè* suddenly throws aside the scarf which envelops him, unfastens his girdle, and, seizing the sacred knife, slits open his stomach in one long cut. While the blood flows in every direction, the multitude prostrate themselves before the terrible spectacle, and the enthusiast is interrogated about all sorts of hidden things, as to future events, as to the destiny of certain personages. The replies of the *Boktè* to all these questions are regarded by everybody as oracles.

When the devout curiosity of the numerous pilgrims is satisfied, the lamas resume; but now calmly and gravely, the recitation of their prayers. The *Boktè* takes, in his right hand, blood from his wound, raises it to his mouth, breathes thrice upon it, and then throws it into the air, with loud cries. He next passes his hand rapidly over his wound, closes it, and everything after a while resumes its pristine condition, no trace remaining of the diabolical operation, except extreme prostration. The *Boktè* once more rolls his scarf round him, recites in a low voice a short prayer; then all is over, and the multitude disperse, with the exception of a few of the especially devout, who remain to contemplate and to adore the blood-stained altar which the saint has quitted.

These horrible ceremonies are of frequent occurrence in the great lamaseries of Tartary and Thibet.

Other Astonishing Practices.

It is not every lama that can perform miraculous operations. Those who have the fearful power to cut themselves open, for example, are never found in the higher ranks of the lama hierachy. They are generally lay lamas of indifferent character, and little esteemed by their comrades. The regular lamas generally make no scruple to avow their horror

of the spectacle. In their eyes all these operations are wicked and diabolical. Good lamas, they say, are incapable of performing such acts, and should not even desire to attain the impious talent.

Though these demoniac operations are, in general, decried in well-regulated lamaseries, yet the superiors do not prohibit them. On the contrary, there are certain days in the year set apart for the disgusting spectacle. Interest is, doubtless, the only motive which could induce the Grand Lamas to favour actions which in their conscience they reprove. The fact is that these diabolical displays are an infallible means of collecting together a swarm of stupid and ignorant devotees, who communicate renown to the lamasery and enrich it with the numerous offerings which the Tartars never fail to bring with them on such occasions.

Cutting open the abdomen is one of the most famous *sié-fa* (supernaturalisms) possessed by the lamas. There are others of the same class, less imposing, but more common; these are practised in people's houses, privately, and not at the great solemnities of the lamaseries. For example, they heat irons red-hot and then lick them with impunity; they make incisions in various parts of the body, which an instant afterwards leave no trace behind, &c. All these operations have to be preceded by the recitation of some prayer.

We knew a lama who, according to everyone's belief, could fill a vase with water by the mere agency of a prayer; but we could never induce him to try the experiment in our presence. He told us that as we held not the same faith with him, the experiment in our company would not be merely fruitless, but would expose him to serious danger. One day, however, he recited to us the prayer of his *sié-fa*. It was brief, but we readily recognized in it a direct appeal to the assistance of the demon. "I know thee, thou knowest me"; thus it ran. "Come, old friend, do what I ask of thee. Bring

water and fill the vase I hold out to thee. To fill a vase with water, what is that to thy vast power? I know thou chargest dear for a vase of water; but never mind; do what I ask of thee and fill the vase I present to thee. Some time hence we'll come to a reckoning; on the appointed day thou shalt receive thy due." It sometimes happens that the appeal remains without effect; in such cases praying is discontinued, and the being invoked is assailed with insults and imprecations.

The famous *sié-fa* that was now attracting so large a number of pilgrims to the Lamasery of Rache-Tchurin inspired us with the idea of repairing thither also and of neutralizing by our prayers the Satanic invocations of the lamas.

Pilgrimage by Prostration.

Next morning at day-break we were in motion. We had not proceeded far when we discovered before us, outlined on the yellow ground of a sandy hill, several large buildings, surrounded with a multitude of white huts. This was the Lamasery of Rache-Tchurin, which, as we approached it, seemed to us a well-built, well-kept place. The three Buddhist temples which rise from the centre of the establishment are of elegant, of majestic construction. The entrance to the principal temple is through a square tower of colossal proportions, at each angle of which is a monstrous dragon elaborately carved in stone. We traversed the lamasery from one end to the other, along the chief streets. There was throughout religious and solemn silence. The only persons we saw were a few lamas enveloped in their large red scarfs, who, after giving us the salutation of the day in a tone scarce above a whisper, gravely continued their melancholy walk.

Towards the western extremity of the lamasery Samdadchiemba's little mule shied and then dashed off at a gallop, followed in its irregular flight by the two baggage camels. The animals on which we were mounted were equally

alarmed. All this disorder was occasioned by a young lama, who was stretched at full length in the middle of the street, performing a rite in great vogue among the Buddhists, which consists in making the circuit of a lamasery prostrating yourself, with your forehead to the ground, at every single step you make. Sometimes the number of devotees performing together this painful pilgrimage is perfectly prodigious; they follow each other, in Indian file, along a narrow path which encircles the entire lamasery and its appendant buildings. Anyone who deviates in the slightest degree from the prescribed line is considered to have failed in his devotion, and loses all the fruit he would otherwise have derived from his previous toil. Where the lamasery is of any extent, the devotees have hard work to get through the ceremony in the course of a long day; so that the pilgrims who have undertaken this exercise and have started early in the morning think themselves lucky if they can complete the operation by nightfall. For the pilgrimage must be performed without intermission, so strictly that the pilgrims are not allowed to stop for a moment even to take a little nourishment. If after commencing the rite you do not complete it offhand, it does not count; you have acquired no merit and you are not to expect any spiritual profit.

Each prostration must be perfect, so that the body shall be stretched flat along the ground, and the forehead touch the earth, the arms being spread out before you and the hands joined, as if in prayer. Before rising, the pilgrim describes each time a semi-circle on the ground by means of a goat's horn which he holds in either hand, the line being completed by drawing the arm down to the side. You cannot but feel infinite compassion when you look upon these wretched creatures, their faces and clothes all covered with dust or mud. The most inclement weather will not check their intrepid devotion; they continue their prostrations amid snow and rain and the most piercing cold.

Curious Methods of Prayer.

There are various modes of performing the pilgrimage round a lamasery. Some pilgrims do not prostrate themselves at all, but carry, instead, a load of prayer-books, the exact weight of which is prescribed them by the Great Lama, and the burden of which is so oppressive at times that you see old men, women, and children absolutely staggering under it. When, however, they have successfully completed the circuit, they are deemed to have recited all the prayers contained in the books they have carried. Others content themselves with simply walking the circuit, telling the beads of their long chaplets, or constantly turning a sort of wheel, placed in the right hand, which whirls about with inconceivable rapidity. This instrument is called *Tchu-Kor* (turning prayer). You see in every brook a number of these *Tchu-Kor*, which are turned by the current and in their movement are reputed to be praying, night and day, for the benefit of those who erect them. The Tartars suspend them over the fireplace, and these in their movements are supposed to pray for the peace and prosperity of the whole family, emblemed by the hearth. The movement itself is effected by the thorough draught occasioned by the openings at the top of the tent.

The Buddhists have another mode of simplifying pilgrimages and devotional rites. In all the great lamaseries you find at short intervals figures in the form of barrels, turning upon an axle. The material of these figures is a thick board, composed of infinite sheets of paper pasted together, upon which are written in Thibetian characters the prayers most reputed throughout the country. Those who have not the taste, or the zeal, or the strength to carry huge boards of books on their shoulders, or to prostrate themselves, step after step, in the dust and mire, or to walk round the lamasery in winter's cold or summer's heat, have recourse to the simple and

expeditious medium of the prayer barrel. All they have to do is to set it in motion; it then turns of itself for a long time, the devotees drinking, eating, or sleeping, while the complacent mechanism is turning prayers for them.

One day, on approaching a prayer barrel, we found two lamas quarrelling furiously and just on the point of coming to blows, the occasion being the fervour of each for prayer. One of them, having set the prayer automaton in motion, had quietly returned to his cell. As he was entering it, he turned his head, doubtless to enjoy the spectacle of the fine prayers he had set to work for himself, but to his infinite disgust he saw a colleague stopping his prayers and about to turn on the barrel on his own account. Indignant at this pious fraud, he ran back and stopped his competitor's prayers. Thus it went on for some time, the one turning on, the other stopping the barrel, without a word said on either side. At last, however, their patience exhausted, they came to high words; from words they proceeded to menaces, and it would doubtless have come to a fight had not an old lama, attracted by the uproar, interposed words of peace, and himself put the automaton in motion for the joint benefit of both parties.

Besides the pilgrims whose devotion is exercised within or about the lamaseries, you find many who have undertaken fearfully long journeys, which they execute with a prostration at every step. Sad and lamentable is it to see these unhappy victims of error enduring to no purpose such terrible and painful labours; one's heart is pierced with grief, and one's soul impressed with yearning for the day when these poor Tartars shall consecrate to the service of the true God that religious energy which they daily waste upon a vain and lying creed. We had hoped to profit by the solemnities at Rache-Tchurin to announce the true faith to the Ortous; but such was doubtless not the will of God, since He had per-

mitted us to lose our way on the very day which seemed most favourable for our project.

The Country of Nitre and Salt.

At a short distance from Rache-Tchurin we reached a road well marked out, and covered with travellers. It was not, however, devotion that had set these people in motion, as it had the pilgrims whom we saw at the lamasery; mere matter of business was leading them towards the Dabsoun-Noor (the Salt Lake), celebrated throughout western Manchuria, and which supplies with salt, not only the adjacent Tartars, but also several provinces of the Chinese Empire.

For a day's journey before you reach Dabsoun-Noor the soil changes by degrees its form and aspect; losing its yellow tint, it becomes insensibly white, as though thinly covered with snow. The earth, swelling in every direction, forms innumerable hillocks, cone-shaped, and of a regularity so perfect that you might suppose them to have been constructed by the hand of man. Sometimes they are grouped in heaps, one on the other, like pears piled on a plate; they are of all sizes, some but just created, others old, exhausted, and falling to decay. Around these excrescences grow creeping thorns, long-pointed, without flowers or leaves, which, intertwining spirally, surmount them with a sort of network cap. These thorns are never found elsewhere than about these hillocks; upon those of more recent growth they are firm, vigorous, and full of shoots. Upon the elder elevations they are dried up, calcined by the nitre, brittle, and in shreds.

As you look upon these numerous mounds, covered with a thick efflorescence of nitre, it is obvious to your sense that beneath the surface, and at no great depth, some great chemical operation is in progress. Springs, generally so rare in the Ortoous country, are here of frequent occurrence, but the water is for the most part excessively salt. Here and there,

however, by the very side of a brackish pool, there is a spring of soft, sweet, delicious water; all such are indicated to travellers by a small flag, fluttering from the end of a long pole.

Dabsoun-Noor is not so much a lake as a reservoir of mineral salt, mixed with nitrous efflorescence. The latter, in colour pale white, and crumbling between the fingers, is easily distinguishable from the salt, which is of a grey tint and glitters like crystal when broken. Dabsoun-Noor is about twenty *lis* in circumference. Around it, at intervals, are the tents occupied by the Mongols who work it, and the Chinese who have thrust themselves in as partners. It were difficult indeed to find any description of industry or commerce within a certain range of their own country in which the Chinese do not contrive to have a hand. The manipulation to which the salt is subjected requires neither great labour nor great science. All the workers do is to pick it up as it comes in the reservoir, to pile it, and, when the heap is of a certain size, to cover it with a thin coating of potter's earth. When the salt has sufficiently purified itself, the Tartars convey it to the nearest Chinese mart and exchange it for tea, tobacco, brandy, and other commodities. In the locality itself salt is of no value: at every step you see lumps of it, sometimes of remarkable purity. We filled a bag with these for our own use and for that of the camels, which are all very fond of salt. We traversed Dabsoun-Nour throughout its breadth from east to west, and we had to take the utmost precaution as we proceeded over its loose, and at times almost moving, soil. The Tartars recommended us not to deviate in the least from the path we should find marked out, and by all means to avoid any places where we should see the water bubbling up, for there, they informed us, were gulfs which they had frequently endeavoured to sound, but without result. This statement induced us to believe that there is a *noor*, or lake, here, but that

it is underground, the place called Dabsoun-Noor being merely the covering or roof of the lake, composed of the saline and saltpetrous matter produced by the constant evaporation of the subterranean waters. Foreign matter, brought by the wind and consolidated by the rain, would in the lapse of time form a crust upon such a roof strong enough to bear the caravans that incessantly traverse Dabsoun-Noor.

Remarks on the Camels of Tartary.

This great salt-mine seems to pervade with its influence the whole Ortous district, throughout whose extent the water is brackish, the soil arid, and the surface encrusted with saline matter. This absence of rich pasturage and fresh water is very adverse to the growth of cattle; but the camel, whose robust and hardy temperament adapts itself to the most sterile regions, affords compensation to the Tartars of the Ortous. This animal, a perfect treasure to the dwellers in the desert, can remain a fortnight, or even a month, without eating or drinking. However wretched the land may be on which it is put to feed, it can always find wherewith to satisfy its hunger, especially if the soil be impregnated with salt or nitre. Things that no other animal will touch, to it are welcome; briars and thorns, dry wood itself, supply it with efficient food.

Though it costs so little to keep, the camel is of an utility inconceivable to those who are not acquainted with the countries in which Providence has placed it. Its ordinary load is from seven to eight hundred pounds, and it can carry this load ten leagues a day. Those, indeed, which are employed to carry dispatches are expected to travel eighty leagues per diem, but then they only carry the dispatch-bearer. In several countries of Tartary the carriages of the kings and princes are drawn by camels, and sometimes they are harnessed to palankeens, but this can only be done in the

level country. The fleshy nature of their feet does not permit them to climb mountains when they have a carriage or litter of any sort to draw after them.

The training of the young camel is a business requiring great care and attention. For the first week of its life it can neither stand nor suck without some helping hand. Its long neck is then of such excessive flexibility and fragility that it runs the risk of dislocating it unless someone is at hand to sustain the head while it sucks the teats of its dam.

The camel, born to servitude, seems impressed from its birth with a sense of the yoke it is destined to bear through life. You never see the young camel playing and frolicking about, as you see kids, colts, and other young animals. It is always grave, melancholy, and slow in its movements, which it never hastens unless under compulsion. In the night, and often in the day also, it sends forth a mournful cry, like that of an infant in pain. It seems to feel that joy or recreation is not within its portion, that its inevitable career is forced labour and long fastings, until death shall relieve it.

The maturation of the camel is a long affair. It cannot carry even a single rider until its third year, and it is not in full vigour until it is eight years old. Its trainers then begin to try it with loads, gradually heavier and heavier. If it can rise with its burden, this is a proof that it can carry it throughout the journey. When that journey is only of brief duration, they sometimes load the animal in excess, and then they aid it to rise by means of bars and levers. The camel's capacity for labour endures for a long time. Provided that at certain periods of the year it is allowed a short holiday for pasturing at its leisure, it will continue its service for fully fifty years.

Nature has provided the camel with no means of defence against other animals, unless you may so consider its

piercing, prolonged cry, and its huge, shapeless, ugly frame, which resembles, at a distance, a heap of ruins. It seldom kicks, and when it does, it almost as seldom inflicts any injury. Its soft, fleshy foot cannot wound, or even bruise you; neither can the camel bite an antagonist. In fact, its only practical means of defence against man or beast is a sort of vehement sneeze, wherewith it discharges, from nose and mouth, a mass of filth against the object which it seeks to intimidate or to annoy.

Yet the entire male camels — *bore*, as the Tartars call them (*temen* being the generic appellation of the animal) — are very formidable during the twelfth moon, which is their rutting time. At this period their eyes are inflamed, an oily, fetid humour exhales from their heads, their mouths are constantly foaming, and they eat and drink absolutely nothing whatever. In this state of excitement they rush at whatever presents itself, man or beast, with a fierceness of precipitation which it is impossible to avoid or to resist; and when they have overthrown the object they have pursued, they pound it beneath the weight of their bodies. The epoch passed, the camel resumes its ordinary gentleness and the routine of its laborious career.

The females do not produce young until their sixth or seventh year; the period of gestation is fourteen months. The Tartars geld most of their male camels, which by this operation acquire a greater development of strength, height, and size. Their voices become at the same time thinner and lower, in some instances wholly lost; and the hair is shorter and finer than that of the entire camels.

The awkward aspect of the camel, the excessive stench of its breath, its heavy, ungraceful movements, its projecting hare-lips, the callosities which disfigure various parts of its body, all contribute to render its appearance repulsive; yet its extreme gentleness and docility, and the services it

renders to man, render it of pre-eminent utility and make us forget its deformity.

Notwithstanding the apparent softness of its feet, the camel can walk upon the most rugged ground, upon sharp flints, or thorns, or roots of trees, without wounding itself. Yet if too long a journey is continuously imposed upon it, if after a certain march you do not give it a few days' rest, the outer skin wears off, the flesh is bared, and the blood flows. Under such distressing circumstances the Tartars make sheep-skin shoes for it, but this assistance is unavailing without rest; for if you attempt to force the camel to proceed, it lies down, and you are compelled either to remain with or abandon it.

There is nothing which the camel so dreads as wet, marshy ground. The instant it places its feet upon anything like mud, it slips and slides and generally, after staggering about like a drunken man, falls heavily on its sides.

When about to repose, it kneels down, folds its fore-legs symmetrically under its body, and stretches out its long neck before it on the ground. In this position it looks just like a monstrous snail.

Every year towards the close of spring the camel sheds its hair, every individual bristle of which disappears before a single sprout of the new stock comes up. For twenty days the animal remains completely bare, as though it had been closely shaved all over, from the top of the head to the extremity of the tail. At this juncture, it is excessively sensitive to cold or wet; and you see it, at the slightest chillness in the air or the least drop of rain, shivering and shaking in every limb, like a man without clothes exposed on the snow. By degrees the new hair shows itself, in the form of fine, soft, curling wool, which gradually becomes a long, thick fur, capable of resisting the extremest inclemency of the weather. The greatest delight of the animal is to walk in the teeth of the north wind, or to stand motionless on the summit of a hill, beaten

by the storm and inhaling the icy wind. Some naturalists say that the camel cannot exist in cold countries; these writers must have wholly forgotten the Tartarian camels, which, on the contrary, cannot endure the least heat, and which certainly could not exist in Arabia.

The hair of an ordinary camel weighs about ten pounds. It is sometimes finer than silk, and always longer than sheep's wool. The hair growing below the neck and on the legs of the entire camels is rough, bushy, and in colour black, whereas that of the ordinary camel is red, grey, and white. The Tartars make no sort of use of it. In the places where the animals pasture, you see great sheets of it, looking like dirty rags, driven about by the wind, until they are collected in sheltered corners, in the hillsides. The utmost use the Tartars make of it is to twist some of it into cord, or into a sort of canvas, of which they construct sacks and carpets.

The milk of the camel is excellent and supplies large quantities of butter and cheese. The flesh is hard, unsavoury, and little esteemed by the Tartars. They use the hump, however, which, cut into slices and dissolved in tea, serves the purpose of butter. It is known that Heliogabalus had camel's flesh served up at his banquets and that he was very fond of camel's feet. We cannot speak as to the latter dish, which the Roman Emperor piqued himself upon having invented, but we can distinctly affirm that camel's flesh is detestable.



MONGOL BUTCHER.

CHAPTER IX

THE environs of the Dabsoun-Noor abound in flocks of goats and sheep. These animals like to browse on the furze and thorny bushes, the sole vegetation of these barren steppes; they especially delight in those nitrous efflorescences which are found here on all sides in the utmost abundance. The soil, miserable as it is in other respects, seems very favourable to the growth of these animals, which enter largely into the consumption of the Tartars, constituting indeed the basis of their food. If bought on the spot, they are of very moderate price. As we calculated that a pound of meat would cost us less than a pound of flour, we resolved, as a matter of economy, to buy a sheep. The thing was not difficult to find; but as it would of course oblige us to stop, at least for a day, we waited till we should come to some place not quite barren, where our animals could find some pasturage to browse upon.

Two days after crossing Dabsoun-Noor we entered a long, narrow valley, where some Mongol families had stationed themselves. The earth was covered with a close herb, which in form and character had much resemblance to thyme. Our beasts, as they proceeded, browsed furtively, right and left, on this plant, and seemed to be very fond of it. This new pasturage gave us the idea of encamping on the spot. Not far from a tent, a lama was sitting on a hillock, making ropes with camel's hair. "Brother," said we as we approached him, "the flock upon that hill doubtless belongs to you. Will you sell us a sheep?" "Certainly," he answered, "I will let you have an excellent sheep; as to the price, we shall not quarrel about that. We men of prayer are not like merchants." He indicated to us a spot near his own tent, and unloaded our beasts. The entire family of the lama, when they heard the cries of our camels, hastened to assist us to encamp. We, indeed, were not allowed to do anything to it; for our new friends took delight in making themselves useful, in unsaddling the beasts, pitching the tent, and putting our baggage in order within.

The young lama who had received us with so much kindness, after having unsaddled the horse and the mule, perceived that both these beasts were hurt a little on the back. "Brothers," he said, "here is a bad business; and as you are upon a long journey, it must be remedied or you will not be able to go on." So saying, he took the knife which hung from his girdle, sharpened it with rapidity upon his boot-tops, took our saddles to pieces, examined the rough parts of the wood, and pared them away on both sides till he had removed the slightest unevenness. He then put together again, with wonderful skill, all the pieces of the saddles, and returned them to us. "That will do," said he; "now you may travel in peace." This operation was effected rapidly and in the readiest manner possible. The lama was

then about to fetch the sheep; but, as it was already late, we said it was unnecessary, for that we should remain a whole day in his valley.

Next morning, before we were awake, the lama opened the door of our tent, laughing so loud that he aroused us. "Ah," said he, "I see plainly that you do not intend to depart today. The sun is already very high, and you sleep still." We rose quickly, and as soon as we were dressed, the lama spoke of the sheep. "Come to the flock," he said; "you may choose at your pleasure." "No, go by yourself, and select a sheep for us yourself. At present we have an occupation. With us lamas of the western sky it is a rule to pray as soon as we rise." "Oh, what a fine thing!" said the lama; "oh, the holy rules of the West!" His admiration, however, did not make him forget his little affair of business. He mounted his horse and rode towards a flock of sheep which we saw undulating upon the slope of a hill.

We had not yet finished our prayers when we heard the Tartar returning at full gallop. He had fastened the sheep to the back of his saddle, like a portmanteau. Hardly arrived at the door of our tent, he dismounted; and in the twinkling of an eye he had put upon its four legs the poor sheep, quite astounded at the ride it had been favoured with. "That is the sheep; is it not fine? Does it suit you?" "Admirably. What is the price?" "One ounce; is that too much?" Considering the size of the animal, we thought the price moderate. "You ask an ounce; here is an ingot, which is just of the weight you require. Sit down for a moment; we will fetch our scales, and you shall ascertain whether this piece of silver really weighs an ounce." At these words the lama drew back and cried, stretching out both hands towards us: "Above there is a heaven, below there is the earth, and Buddha is the lord of all things. He wills that men behave towards each other like brothers; you are of the West, I am

of the East. Is that any reason why the intercourse between us should not be frank and honourable? You have not cheapened my sheep: I take your money without weighing it." "An excellent principle," said we. "As you will not weigh the money, pray sit, nevertheless, for a moment; we will take a cup of tea together and talk over a little matter." "I know what you mean; neither you nor I may cause the transmigration of this living being. We must find a layman who knows how to kill sheep. Is it not so?" and without awaiting an answer he added: "Another thing; from your appearance, one may easily guess that you are no great hands at cutting up sheep and preparing them." "You are not mistaken," we answered, laughing. "Well, keep the sheep tied to your tent; and for the rest, rely upon me; I shall be back in a minute." He mounted his horse, went off at full gallop, and disappeared in a bend of the vale.

According to his promise, the lama soon returned. He went straight to his tent, tied his horse to a post, took off his saddle, bridle, and halter, gave it a cut with his whip, and so sent it off to pasture. He went into his tent for a little while and then appeared with all the members of his family; that is to say, his old mother and two younger brothers. They advanced slowly towards our tent, in truly ridiculous fashion, just as if they were going to remove all their furniture. The lama carried on his head a large pot, which covered him as with an enormous hat. His mother had on her back a large basket, filled with argols. The two young Mongols followed with a trivet, an iron spoon, and several other minor kitchen implements. At this sight Samdadchiemba was full of joy, for he saw before him a whole day of poetry.

When the entire *batterie de cuisine* was arranged in open air, the lama invited us, in his politeness, to go and repose in our tent for a while. He judged from our air that we could not, without derogation, be present at the approaching

scene of butchering. The suggestion, however, did not meet our views, and we requested that if we could do so without inconveniencing them, we might sit down on the grass at a respectful distance, and with the promise that we would not touch anything. After some objections, perceiving that we were curious to be spectators, they dispensed with the etiquette of the matter.

The Little Hump-backed Butcher.

The lama seemed anxious; he kept looking towards the north of the valley, as if expecting someone. "All right," he said at last, with an air of satisfaction, "here he comes." "Who comes? Of whom do you speak?" "I forgot to tell you that I had been just now to invite a layman to come who is very skilful in killing a sheep. There he is." We rose and perceived, indeed, something moving among the heath of the valley. At first we could not clearly distinguish what it was, for though it advanced with some rapidity, the object did not seem to enlarge. At last the most singular person we had ever met with in our lives presented himself to our view. We were obliged to make the utmost efforts to repress the strong impulse to laughter that came upon us. This layman seemed to be about fifty years old, but his height did not exceed three feet. On the top of his head, which terminated like a sugar-loaf, rose a small tuft of badly combed hair; a grey, thin beard descended in disorder down his chin. Finally, two prominences, one on his back, the other on his breast, communicated to this little butcher a perfect resemblance with *Æsop*, as he appears in various editions of the *Fables* of La Fontaine.

The strong sonorous voice of the layman was in singular contrast with the exiguity of his thin, stunted frame. He did not lose much time in saluting the company. After having darted his small black eyes at the sheep, which was tied

to one of the nails of our tent; he said: "Is this the beast you wish to have put in order?" And while feeling its tail in order to judge its fat, he gave it a turn, and placed it on its back with remarkable dexterity. He next tied together its legs; then, while uncovering his right arm by throwing back the sleeve of his leathern coat, he asked whether the operation was to be effected in the tent or outside. "Outside," said we. "Outside, very well, outside"; so saying, he drew from a leathern sheath, suspended from his sash, a knife with a large handle, but whose blade by long use had become thin and narrow. After having examined for a moment its point with his thumb, he plunged it to the hilt into the side of the sheep, drawing it out quite red; the sheep was dead, dead at once, without making any movement; not a single drop of blood had spouted from the wound. We were greatly astonished at this, and asked the little man how he managed to kill a sheep so very easily and quickly. "We Tartars," he said, "do not kill in the same way as the Kitat; they cut the throat; we go straight to the heart. By our method the animal suffers less, and all the blood is, as it should be, retained in the interior."

The transmigration once operated, nobody had any further scruples. Our Dchiahour and the Tartar lama turned back their sleeves and advanced to assist the little butcher. The sheep was skinned with admirable celerity. Meantime the mother of the lama had made the two pots boil. She now took the entrails of the sheep, washed them pretty clean, and then, with the blood which she took from the interior of the sheep by means of a large wooden spoon, prepared some puddings, the basis of which was the never-failing oatmeal. "Sirs Lamas," said the little layman, "shall I bone the sheep?" Upon our answering in the affirmative, he had the animal hooked upon the tent, for he was not big enough to perform that operation himself; he then mounted upon a large stone,

and, passing his knife rapidly along the bones, he detached, in one piece, all the meat, so as to leave dangling from the tent a mere skeleton, clean, cleared, and nicely polished.

A Regal Repast.

While the little layman was, according to his expression, putting in order the flesh of the sheep, the rest of the company had prepared a gala in the Tartar fashion. The young lama was director of the feast. "Now," he cried, "let us all sit round; the great pot is going to be emptied." Forthwith everyone sat down upon the turf. The old Mongol woman plunged both hands into the pot, which was boiling over, and drew out all the intestines — the liver, the heart, the kidneys, the spleen, and the bowels, stuffed with blood and oatmeal. In this gastronomical preparation the most remarkable thing was that all the intestines had been retained in their integrity, so that they presented themselves much as they are seen in the living beast. The old woman served up, or rather threw this splendid dish upon the lawn, which was at once our chair, table, plate, and, in case of need, our napkin. It is unnecessary to add that we used our fingers instead of forks. Everyone seized with his hands a portion of the bowels, twisted it from the mass, and devoured it without seasoning or salt.

The two French missionaries were not able, despite their utmost willingness, to do honour to this Tartar dish. First we burned our fingers when we tried to touch the hot and smoking repast. Although our guests urged that it ought not to be allowed to grow cold, we waited a little, afraid of burning our lips also. At last we tasted these puddings of sheep's blood and oatmeal, but after getting down a few mouthfuls, we were quite satisfied. Never, perhaps, had we eaten anything so utterly tasteless and insipid. Samdadchiemba, having foreseen this, had withdrawn from the common dish the

liver and the kidneys, which he placed before us, with some salt, which he had previously crushed between two stones. We were thus enabled to keep pace with the company, who, with a devouring appetite, were swallowing the vast system of entrails.

When the whole had disappeared, the old woman brought up the second service, by placing in the midst of us the large pot in which the puddings had been cooked. Instantly all the members of the banquet invited each other, and everyone, taking from his bosom his wooden porringer, ladled out bumpers of a smoking, salt liquid, which they dignified with the pompous name of sauce. As we did not wish to appear eccentric, or as if we despised the Tartar cuisine, we did like the rest. We plunged our porringers into the pot, but it was only by the most laudable efforts that we could get down this green stuff, which gave us the idea of half-masticated grass. The Tartars, on the contrary, found it delicious, and readily reached the bottom of the extempore tureen, not stopping for a moment till nothing was left — not a drop of sauce, not an inch of pudding.

When the feast was finished, the little layman took leave, receiving as his fee the four feet of the sheep. To this fee, fixed by the old custom of the Mongols, we added, as a supplement, a handful of tea-leaves, for we desired that he should long remember and talk to his countrymen of the generosity of the lamas of the western sky.

Anatomic and Veterinary Skill of the Mongols.

Everyone having now thoroughly regaled, our neighbours took their kitchen utensils and returned home, except the young lama, who said he would not leave us alone. After much talk about the East and the West, he took down the skeleton, which was still hanging at the entrance of the tent, and amused himself with reciting, or rather singing, the

nomenclature of all the bones, large and small, that compose the frame of the sheep. He perceived that our knowledge on this subject was very limited, and this extremely astonished him; and we had the greatest trouble to make him understand that in our country ecclesiastical studies had for their object more serious and important matters than the names and number of the bones of a sheep.

Every Mongol knows the number, the name, and the position of the bones which compose the frame of animals; and thus they never break the bones when they are cutting up an ox or a sheep. With the point of their large knife they go straight and at once to the juncture of the bones and separate them with astonishing skill and celerity. These frequent dissections, and especially the habit of being every day amongst their flocks, make the Tartars well acquainted with the diseases of animals, and skilful in their cure. The remedies which they employ internally are always simples gathered in the prairie, and the decoction of which they make the sick animals drink. For this purpose they use a large cow-horn. When they have contrived to insert the small end of this into the mouth of the animal, they pour the physic in at the other extremity, as through a funnel. If the beast persists in not opening its mouth, the liquid is administered through the nostrils. Sometimes the Tartars employ a lavement in their treatment of the diseases of animals, but their instruments are still of primitive simplicity. A cow's horn serves for the pipe, and the pump is a great bladder, worked by squeezing it.

Internal remedies, however, are not very often applied; the Tartars make more frequent use of punctures and incisions in different parts of the body. Some of these operations are extremely ludicrous. One day, when we had pitched our tent beside a Mongol dwelling, a Tartar brought to the chief of the family a cow, which, he said, would not eat and which was pining away day by day. The chief examined the

animal, opened its mouth, and rubbed its foreteeth with his nail. "Fool, blockhead," said he to the man who had come to ask his advice, "why did not you come before? Your cow is on the verge of death; there is scarce a day's life more in her. Yet there may be tried one means; I will attempt it. If your cow dies, you will say it is your own fault; if it recovers, you will regard it as a great favour from Hormousdha, operated by my skill." He called some of his slaves and ordered them to keep a firm hold of the beast while he was operating upon it. Then he entered his tent, whence he soon returned armed with a nail and a great hammer. We waited with impatience this strange chirurgical operation, which was to be performed with a nail and a hammer. While several Mongols held the cow in order to prevent its running away, the operator placed the nail under its belly and then drove it in up to the head with a violent stroke of the hammer. Next he seized with both hands the tail of the cow and ordered those who were holding it to let go. Instantly the animal that had been so very singularly operated upon dashed off, dragging after it the veterinary Tartar clinging to its tail. In this fashion they ran nearly a *li*. The Tartar then quitted his victim and came quietly back to us, who were quite amazed at this new method of curing cows. He declared there was no further danger for the beast; for he had ascertained, he said, by the stiffness of the tail, the good effect of the ferruginous medicine he had administered.

The Tartar veterinarians sometimes perform their operations at the belly, as we have just seen; but it is more generally with the head, ears, temple, upper lip, and about the eyes that they deal. The latter operation is principally had recourse to in the disease which the Tartars call "hen's dung," to which mules are greatly subject. When this disease breaks out, the animals leave off eating and fall into extreme weakness, so that they can hardly keep themselves on their

legs; fleshy excrescences, similar to the excrements of poultry, grow under the lids, in the corners of the eyes. If these excrescences are removed in time, the mules are saved, and recover by degrees their original rigour; if not, they pine for a few days and then die.

Although cupping and bleeding have great place in the veterinary art of the Tartars, you must not suppose that they have at their disposal fine collections of instruments, such as those of European operators. Most of them have nothing but their ordinary knife, or the small iron awl, which they keep in their girdle and which they use daily to clear their pipes and mend their saddles and leathern boots.

The young lama who had sold us the sheep spent a great part of the day in telling us anecdotes, more or less piquant and curious, about the veterinary science, in which he seemed to be very skilful. Moreover, he gave us important instructions concerning the road we had to pursue. He settled the stages we ought to make and indicated the places where we should encamp so as to prevent our dying from thirst. We had still before us in the country of the Ortous a journey of about fourteen days; in all that time we should find neither rivulet, nor spring, nor cistern, but only at certain distances wells of an extraordinary depth, some of them distant from each other two days' march, so that we should have to carry with us our provision of water.

The Watering-Place.

Next morning, after having paid our respects to the Tartar family, who had shown us so much kindness, we proceeded on our way. Towards evening, when it was nearly time to pitch our tent, we perceived in the distance a large assemblage of various herds. Thinking that one of the indicated wells lay probably there, we bent our steps in the direction and soon found that we were correct in our anticipa-

tion; the water was before us. The beasts were collected from every quarter, waiting to be watered. We halted accordingly and set up our encampment.

We had scarcely pitched our tent and arranged our modest kitchen when we saw several Tartar horsemen advancing at full gallop. They were coming to draw water and give it to the numerous flocks that had been long awaiting them. There were four Mongol shepherds; while two of them, armed with a long rod, ran about trying to effect a little order among the flocks, the two others drew the water in a manner which greatly excited our surprise. First, the utensil they used by way of pail appeared to us very remarkable; it was the entire skin of a goat, solidly fastened at the four feet, the only opening being at the neck. A hoop kept this orifice open; a long, strong rope of camel's hair was fastened at one end to the wooden handle that crossed the diameter of the orifice, and at the other end to the saddle of the horse ridden by one of the Tartars, who, when the skin was filled, rode off and thus hauled up the bucket to the edge of the well, where it was received by another man, who emptied its contents into the troughs.

The well was of astonishing depth; the rope used to raise the bucket seemed more than two hundred feet long. Instead of running in a pulley, it went right over a large stone, in which a large groove was already made by the constant friction. Although the drawing up of the water was performed with great activity, it was nearly dark before all the flock had been watered; we then brought our five animals to participate in the general banquet, and the Tartars had the complaisance to draw water also for us; otherwise it is probable we should never have got it, but have been obliged to suffer thirst beside an abundant well.

These Tartars did not seem contented, like those we had met with in the other parts of Mongolia; we saw they

were very depressed at being obliged to spend their lives in such a barren country, where pasturage is so very scarce and water still rarer. They talked to us of the Mongol kingdoms through which we had passed, and where it was so easy, so agreeable indeed, to feed animals. "Oh, how happy are the inhabitants of these countries!" said they. "How fortunate were we, could we spend our days amidst those rich pasturages."

Before they returned to their dwelling, which lay behind a high mountain, these Tartars told us that we ought to depart next morning before day-break, for that we should not find any water until we came to the Hundred Wells, which was distant a hundred and fifty *lis* (fifteen leagues).

The Hundred Wells.

Dawn had not yet appeared when we left. The country was, as before, sandy, barren, and dismal. About noon we halted in order to take a little food and to make tea with the water we had brought with us on one of the camels. Night was setting in before we reached the Hundred Wells; our poor animals could hardly move for hunger and fatigue; yet, at all cost, we were obliged to reach the encampment. To remain where we were would have caused infinite wretchedness. At last we came to the wells, and, without troubling ourselves to ascertain whether or no there were a hundred of them, as the Tartar name of the place imported, we hastened to pitch our tent.

As the night had already made considerable progress, we hastened to eat, with excellent appetite, the soup that Samdadchiemba had prepared, and then lay down upon our goatskins, where we enjoyed a profound sleep till day-break.

On getting up next morning a glance around the encampment diffused a shudder of terror through all our

limbs, for we found ourselves surrounded on every side by deep wells. We had been, indeed, told that we should not find water until we reached the place called Hundred Wells, but we had never imagined that this denomination, Hundred Wells, was to be taken literally. When we had pitched our tent the night before, it was too dark for us to remark the presence of these numerous precipices, and accordingly we had taken no precautions.

Encounter with the Cortège of the King of the Alechan.

After having made our usual breakfast, we proceeded. Towards noon we perceived before us a great multitude issuing from a narrow defile formed by two precipitous mountains. We were lost in conjecture as to what this numerous and imposing caravan could be. Innumerable camels, laden with baggage, advanced in single file, one after the other, escorted on either side by a number of horsemen, who, in the distance, appeared to be richly attired. We slackened our pace, to obtain a nearer view of this caravan, which appeared to us a very strange affair.

It was still a considerable distance off when four horsemen, who formed a sort of vanguard, galloped on towards us. They were all four mandarins, as we perceived from the blue button which surmounted their cap of ceremony. "Sirs Lamas," they said, "peace be with you! Towards what point of the earth do you direct your steps?" "We are of the West, and it is to the West we are going. And you, brothers of Mongolia, whither do you travel in so large a troop and in such magnificent apparel?" "We are from the kingdom of Alechan, and our king is making a journey to Peking to prostrate himself at the feet of Him who dwells above the sky." After these few words the four horsemen rose somewhat in their saddles, saluted, and then returned to their position at the head of the caravan.

We had thus encountered on his way the King of Alechan, repairing to Peking with his gorgeous retinue, to be present at the great meeting of the tributary princes, who, on the first day of the first moon, are bound to offer the compliments of the new year to the Emperor. Behind the vanguard came a palankeen carried by two splendid mules, harnessed, the one before, the other behind, to gilt shafts. The palankeen was square, plain, and by no means elegant; its roof was adorned with some silk fringe, and its four panels were decorated with some pictures of dragons, birds, and nosegays. The Tartar monarch was sitting, not upon a seat, but with his legs crossed, in the oriental fashion. He seemed to be about fifty years old; and his full, round features gave to his physiognomy a remarkable air of good nature. As he passed us, we cried: "King of the Alechan, peace and happiness be on your way!" "Men of prayer," he answered, "may you also be at peace," and he accompanied these words with a friendly salute. An old white-bearded lama, mounted upon a magnificent horse, led the fore mule of the palankeen; he was considered the guide of the whole caravan. Generally the great marches of the Tartars are under the guidance of the most venerable of the lamas of the district; for these people are persuaded that they have nothing to fear on their way so long as they have at their head a representative of the divinity, or rather the divinity himself incarnate in the person of the lama.

A great number of horsemen who surrounded, as a guard of honour, the royal palankeen made their horses curvet incessantly and dash up and down, in and out, from one side to the other, without ever stopping in their rapid movements. Immediately behind the carriage of the king came a white camel of extraordinary beauty and size; a young Tartar on foot led it by a silken string. This camel was not laden. From the tips of its humps, which looked like two pyramids,

floated pieces of yellow taffeta. There was no doubt that this tent destined for the Chinese camp consisted of numerous boxes, tents, pots, the things always wanted in a country

Minister of State.

A long time when, meeting our tent beside it. While we were there, one decorated with the red button, the others with the blue button, alighted at the entrance of our dwelling. They asked for news of the caravan of the King of the Alechan. We answered that we had met it a long time since, that it must already be at a considerable distance, and that it would doubtless arrive before night at the encampment of the Hundred Wells. "As it is so," they said, "we would rather remain here than arrive by night at the Hundred Wells, at the risk of falling into some hole. Tomorrow by starting a little before day we shall reach the caravan."

No sooner said than done: the Tartars forthwith unsaddled their horses, sent them off to seek their fortune in the desert, and without ceremony took their seat beside our fire. They were all Taitsi of the kingdom of the Alechan. One of these, he who wore the cap with the red button, was the king's minister; they all three belonged to the great caravan, but the day before, having started to visit a friend, a prince of the Ortous, they had been left behind by the main body.

The minister of the King of Alechan had an open, frank character and a very acute understanding; he combined Mongol good nature with vivacious and elegant manners, which he had no doubt acquired in his frequent visits to Peking.

He asked many questions about the country which the Tartars call the Western Heaven, and informed us that every three years a great number of our countrymen, from the different western kingdoms, rendered their homage to the Emperor at Peking.

It is needless to observe that, for the most part, the Tartars do not carry very far their geographical studies. The West means with them simply Thibet and some adjacent countries which they hear mentioned by the lamas who have made the pilgrimage to Lhasa. They firmly believe that beyond Thibet there is nothing; there, say they, is the end of the world; beyond, there is merely a shoreless ocean.

Tributes Paid the Emperor of China.

When we had satisfied all the inquiries of the red button, we addressed some to him about the country of the Alechan and the journey to Peking. "Every third year all the sovereigns of the world," said he, "repair to Peking, for the feast of the new year. Princes who live near are bound to go thither every year; those who live at the extremities of the earth go every second or third year, according to the distance they have to travel." "What is your purpose in going every year to Peking?" "We ourselves go as the retinue of our king; the king alone enjoys the happiness of prostrating himself in the presence of the Old Buddha (the Emperor)."

One of the banners of the Tchakar is especially charged with sending to Peking every year an immense provision of pheasants' eggs. We asked the minister of the King of the Alechan whether these pheasants' eggs were of a peculiar flavour that they were so highly appreciated by the court. "They are not destined to be eaten," he answered; "the Old Buddha uses them for another purpose." "As they are not eaten, what are they used for?" The Tartar seemed embarrassed, and blushed somewhat as he replied that these

eggs were used to make a sort of varnish, which the women of the imperial harem used for the purpose of smoothing



GRAND CEREMONY AT THE ANCESTRAL TEMPLE.

their hair, and which communicates to it, they say, a peculiar lustre and brilliancy.

Desolation of the Country of the Alechan.

The visit of the three mandarins of the Alechan was not only pleasant on account of the narrative they gave us of the relations of the Tartar kings with the Emperor, but it was of essential utility to us. When they understood that we were directing our steps towards the West, they asked us whether we intended passing through the district of the Alechan. On our answering in the affirmative, they dissuaded us from the project; they told us that our animals would perish there, for not a single pasturage was to be met with. We already knew that the Alechan is a tract still more barren than the Ortous. It consists, in fact, of chains of lofty mountains of

sand, where you may travel sometimes for whole days together without seeing a single blade of vegetation. Some narrow valleys, here and there, alone offer to the flocks a few thorny and wretched plants. On this account the Alechan is very thinly inhabited, even in comparison with the other parts of Mongolia.

The mandarins told us that this year the drought which had been general throughout Tartary had rendered the district of the Alechan almost uninhabitable. They assured us that at least one third of the flocks had perished of hunger and thirst and that the remainder were in a wretched state. For their journey to Peking they had, they said, chosen the best they could find in the country; and we might have observed that the animals of the caravan were very different indeed from those we had seen in Tchakar. The drought, the want of water and pastures, the destruction of the flocks — all this had given birth to an utter state of misery, whence, again, numerous bands of robbers who were ravaging the country and robbing travellers. They assured us that being so few in number, it would not be wise for us to enter upon the Alechan mountains, particularly in the absence of the principal authorities.

On receiving this information we resolved not to retrace our steps, for we were too far advanced, but to diverge a little from our route. The night was far advanced ere we thought of taking rest; we had scarcely slept a few minutes, in fact, when the day broke. The Tartars saddled their steeds and, after having wished us peace and happiness, dashed off at full gallop, to overtake the great caravan which preceded them.

Decision to Traverse the Kan-Sou. Samdadchiemba is Homesick.

As for us, before setting out we unrolled the map of the Chinese Empire and sought upon it to what point we

ought to direct our steps so as to avoid the wretched district of the Alechan, without, however, deviating too much from our route. After looking at the map we saw no other way than to recross the Yellow River, to pass the Great Wall of China, and to travel across the Chinese province of Kan-Sou, until we arrived among the Tartars of the Koukou-Noor. Formerly this determination would have made us tremble. Accustomed as we had been to live privately in our Chinese Christendom, it would have seemed to us impossible to enter the Chinese Empire alone, and without the care of a catechist. At that time it would have seemed to us clear as the day that our strangulation and the persecution of all the Chinese missions would have been the certain result of our rash undertaking. Such would have been our fears formerly, but the time of our fear was gone. Indurated by our two months' journey, we had come to the persuasion that we might travel in China with as much safety as in Tartary. The stay that we had already made in several large commercial towns, compelled as we had been to manage our own affairs, had rendered the Chinese manners and customs more familiar to us. The language presented to us no difficulties; besides being able to speak the Tartar idiom, we were familiar with the colloquial phrases of the Chinese, a very difficult attainment to those who reside in the missions, because the Christians there seek to flatter them by employing, in the presence of the missionaries, only the short vocabulary of words that they have studied in books. Besides these purely moral and intellectual advantages, our long journey had been useful in a physical point of view; the rain, the wind, and the sun, which had during two months raged against our European tint, had in the end embrowned and tanned it so that we looked quite like wild men of the wood in this respect. The fear of being recognized by the Chinese now no longer troubled us.

We told Samdadchiemba that we should cease, in a few days, to travel in the Land of Grass and that we should continue our route through the Chinese Empire. "Travel among the Chinese!" said the Dchiahour; "very well. There are good inns there. They boil good tea there. When it rains, you can go under shelter. During the night you are not disturbed by the blowing of the north wind. But in China there are ten thousand roads; which shall we take? Do we know which is the best?" We made him look at the map, pointing out all the places which we should have to pass before we reached Koukou-Noor. We even reduced, for his edification, into *lis* all the distances from one town to the other. Samdadchiemba looked at our small geographical chart with perfect enthusiasm. "Oh," said he, "how sincerely I regret that I did not study while I was in the lamasery! If I had listened to my master, if I had paid more attention, I might perhaps now understand the description of the world that is here drawn on this piece of paper. With this, one can go everywhere without asking the way. Is it not so?" "Yes, everywhere," answered we; "even to your own family." "How is that? Is my country also written down here?" and as he spoke, he bent over the chart, so as entirely to cover it with his huge frame. "Stand aside and we will show you your country. Look; do you see this little space beside that green line? That is the country of the Dchiahours, which the Chinese call the Three Valleys (San-Tchouen). Your village must be here; we shall pass not more than two days' journey from your house." "Is it possible?" cried he, striking his forehead; "shall we pass two days' journey from my house? Do you say so? How can that be? Not more than two days' journey? In that case, when we are near it, I will ask my spiritual fathers' permission to go and see once more my country." "What can you have to do now in the Three Valleys?" "I will go and see what is doing there. It is eighteen

years since my departure from my house. I will go and see if my old mother is still there; and if she is alive, I will make her enter into the Holy Church. As for my two brothers, who knows whether they will have enough sense not to believe any longer in the transmigrations of Buddha. Ah, yes," added he after a short pause, "I will make a little tea, and we will talk this matter over again."

Samdadchiemba was no longer with us; his thoughts had flown to his native land. We were obliged to remind him of his real position. "Samdadchiemba, you need not make any tea; and just now, instead of talking, we must fold up our tent, load the camels, and proceed on our way. Look; the sun is already high in the heavens; if we do not get on, we shall never reach the Three Valleys." "True," cried he; and, springing up, he set himself busily about making preparations for our departure. On resuming our route we abandoned the direction towards the west, which we had strictly followed during our journey, and diverged a little to the south.

Trepidation Caused by a Wild Beast.

We had scarcely, however, stretched ourselves on the turf when an extraordinary and altogether unexpected noise threw us into a state of stupor. It was a long, lugubrious, deep cry that seemed approaching our tent. We had heard the howl of wolves, the roar of tigers and of bears; but these in no way resembled the sound which now affrighted our ears. It was something like the bellowing of a bull, but crossed with tones so strange and unintelligible that we were utterly panic-stricken. And we were all the more surprised and confounded because everybody had assured us that there were no wild beasts of any kind in the whole Ortous country.

The cries once more approaching, we piled up some brushwood at a few paces from the tent and made a bonfire. The light, instead of deterring the unknown monster, seemed

rather to attract it; and before long, by the flame of the brushwood, we could distinguish the outline of what appeared to be a great quadruped, of reddish hue, the aspect of which, however, as near as we could judge, was by no means so ferocious as its voice. We ventured to advance towards it, but as we advanced, it retreated. Samdadchiemba, whose eyes were very sharp and accustomed to the desert, assured us that the creature was either a dog or a stray calf.

Our animals were, at the very least, as absorbed with the subject as ourselves. The horse and the mule pointed their ears and dug up the earth with their hoofs, while the camels, with outstretched necks and glaring eyes, did not for an instant remove their gaze from the spot whence these wild cries issued.

The Caravan Acquires a Lamé Dog, then Abandons It. Farewell to Tartary.

In order to ascertain precisely with what creature we had to do, we diluted a handful of meal in a wooden dish, and, placing this at the entrance of the tent, withdrew inside. Soon we saw the animal slowly advance, then stop, then advance again. At last it came to the dish and with the most remarkable rapidity lapped up the supper we had prepared for it. We now saw that it was a dog of immense size. After having thoroughly licked and polished the empty dish it lay down without ceremony at the entrance of the tent, and we forthwith followed its example, glad to have found a protector in the apprehended foe.

Next morning, upon awaking, we were able to examine at leisure the dog which, after having so alarmed us, had so unreservedly attached itself to us. Its colour was red, its size immense; its excessive meagreness showed that it had been wandering about homeless for some time past. A dislocated leg, which it dragged along the ground, communicated to it

a sort of swinging motion, which added to its formidable effect. But it was especially alarming when it sent forth its loud, fierce voice. Whenever we heard it, we instinctively looked at the animal whence it proceeded to see whether it really belonged to the canine race.

We resumed our route, and the new Arsalan accompanied us, its general position being a few paces in advance of the caravan, as though to show us the way, with which it appeared to be tolerably familiar.

After two days' journey we reached the foot of a chain of mountains, the summits of which were lost in the clouds. We set about ascending them, however, courageously, for we hoped that beyond them we should find the Yellow River. That day's journey was very painful, especially to the camels, for every step was upon sharp, rugged rock, and their feet, accordingly, were very speedily bleeding. We ourselves, however, were too absorbed with the strange, fantastic aspect of the mountains we were traversing to think of the toil they occasioned us.

In the hollows and chasms of the precipices formed by these lofty mountains you see nothing but great heaps of mica and laminated stones, broken, bruised, and in some cases absolutely pulverized. This wreck of slate and schist must have been brought into these abysses by some deluge, for it in no way belongs to the mountains themselves, which are of granite. As you approach the summits, the mountains assume forms more and more fantastic. You see great heaps of rock piled one upon the other, and apparently cemented together. These rocks are almost entirely encrusted with shells and the remains of a plant resembling seaweed; but that which is most remarkable is that these granitic masses are cut and torn and worn in every direction, presenting a ramification of holes and cavities, meandering in a thousand complicated

turns and twists, so that you might imagine all the upper portion of each mountain to have been subjected to the slow and destructive action of immense worms. Sometimes in the granite you find deep impressions that seem the moulds of monsters, whose forms they still closely retain.

As we gazed upon all these phenomena, it seemed to us that we were travelling in the bed of some exhausted ocean. Everything tended to the belief that these mountains had undergone the gradual action of the sea. It is impossible to attribute all you see there to the influence of mere rain, or still less to the inundations of the Yellow River, which, however prodigious they may be, can never have attained so great an elevation. The geologists who affirm that the deluge took place by sinking, and not by a depolarization of the earth, might probably find in these mountains good arguments in favour of their system.

On reaching the crest of these mountains we saw beneath us the Yellow River, rolling its waves majestically from south to north. It was now near noon, and we hoped that same evening to pass the river and sleep in one of the inns of the little town of Ché-Tsui-Dzé, which we perceived on the slope of a hill beyond the river.

We occupied the whole afternoon in descending the rugged mountain, selecting as we went the places right and left that seemed more practicable than the rest. At length we arrived, and before nightfall, on the banks of the Yellow River, our passage across which was most successfully effected. In the first place, the Mongol Tartars who rented the ferry oppressed our purse less direfully than the Chinese ferrymen had done. Next, the animals got into the boat without any difficulty. The only grievance was that we had to leave our lame dog on the bank, for the Mongols would not admit it on any terms, insisting upon the rule that all dogs must swim across the river, the boat being destined solely

for men or for animals that cannot swim. We were fain to submit to the prejudice.

On the other side of the Yellow River we found ourselves in China, and bade adieu for a while to Tartary, to the desert, and to the nomadic life.

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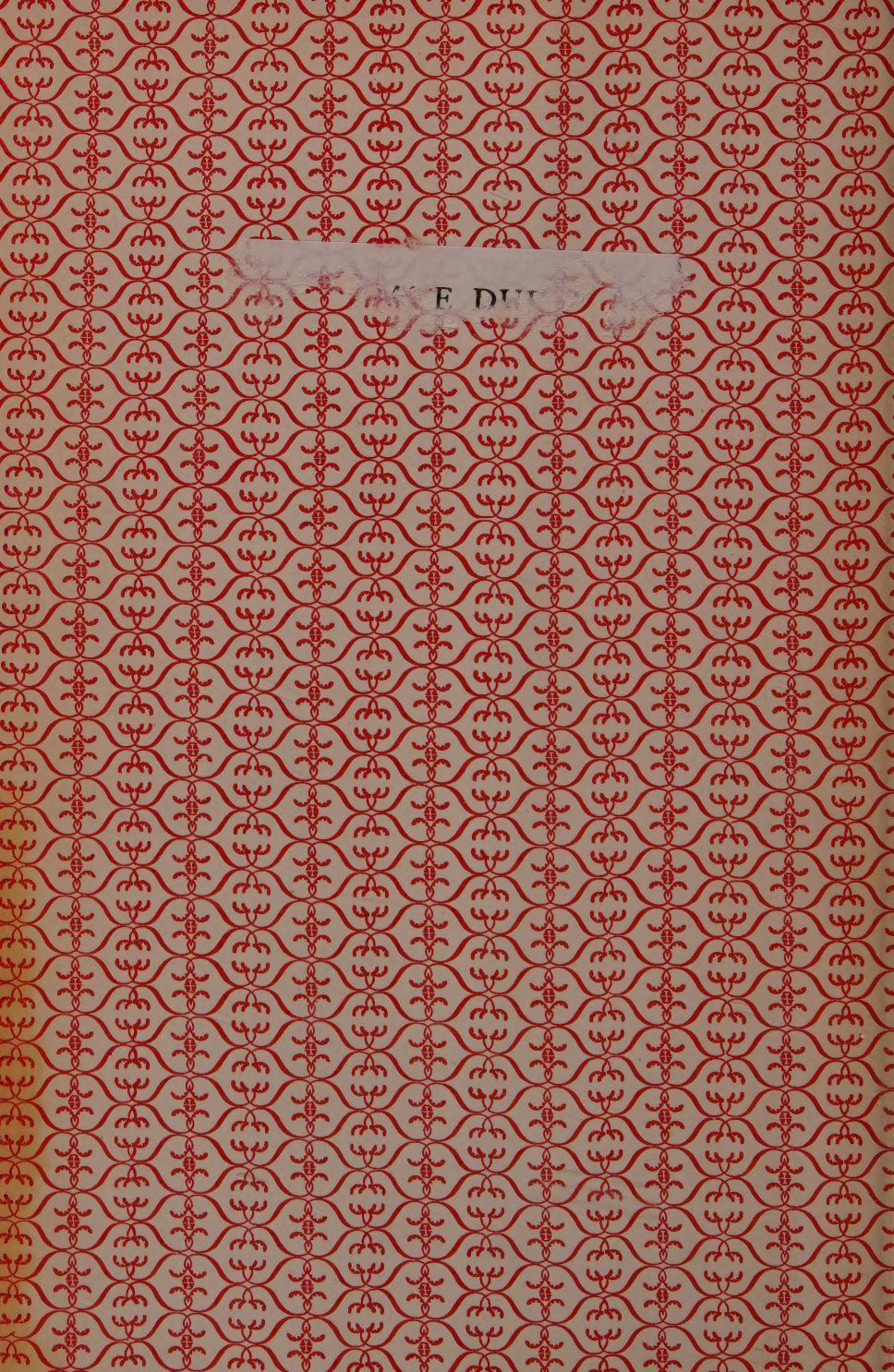
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